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Harkaway and the Italians.

OR,

THE BRIGAND'S DOOM.

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CHAPTER I.

THE RESCUE.

VESUVIUS was still grandly throwing up masses

Barboni was sitting on a bench in the cart, where he had been placed when captured.

Two police officers and two soldiers guarded him, the other men having piled arms by the side of the road and scattered themselves about, some smoking their favorite cigarettes, others drinking the thin, cheap wine.

Now that the band of the brigand chief was known to be destroyed, no thought of a rescue had entered the official mind.

Toro saw that his opportunity had arrived, as

clouds, and the flame of distant Vesuvius, the brigands neared the cart.

Four rifles covered the four guards, and, at a signal from Toro, the men fired with fatal effect.

The guards fell to the ground, and Toro dashed forward with great bravery, reaching the cart just as the alarm was given.

He jumped in, seized the whip, and saying to Barboni "Courage, amico—all is well so far," lashed the horse into a gallop and dashed off into the country.



Harkaway plunged his knife into the count's shoulder, and the wretched man fell to the floor.

of flame and ashes, as Toro and his men hastened along after the soldiers.

They came up with them about half way between Vesuvius and Naples.

The men had been halted by their commanding officer near a roadside inn, where they were allowed half an hour for refreshment.

his keen eye took in the details of the situation we have described.

Small though his band was, numbering only six men beside himself, he did not hesitate to make the attack.

Creeping up in the darkness, only illumined by the moon which was veiled at intervals by passing

The officer in command fired his revolver without effect, and the soldiers rushed to their arms.

It was too late.

This bold rescue had been so well planned, and so ably executed that the cart was out of sight before the men were ready to fire.

This they did in a volley as soon as the

and were so fortunate as to hit two out of the six retreating brigands.

These unfortunates bit the dust, but the others got off, and, joining Toro by running at the top of their speed, formed a small rearguard in the case of pursuit.

The soldiers followed up the road at the double.

Toro, being well acquainted with the country, quitted the high road after going about a mile, turned down a narrow lane, and made for Possilippo.

The soldiers were completely baffled, and furious with rage and vexation, returned to barracks, bearing their dead with them.

The rescue of Barboni created the utmost excitement in Naples, and the officer in charge was tried by court-martial, and dismissed the service for his negligence.

The authorities had paid the traitor his price for the betrayal of his master, and after once more having the redoubtable Barboni in their power, they had let him slip through their fingers.

Toro knew that a strict search would be made all along the countryside, and with a tact very creditable to him, determined to seek an entirely new shelter.

With this end in view, he sought the sea shore.

He had been a boatman before he had killed his man in a drunken quarrel, and, to avoid the galleys, became a brigand with a small following.

The tie that existed between master and men was that they had also dyed their hands in the blood of a fellow-creature.

Toro's knowledge of the coast enabled him to remember that in a wild, wave-washed, rocky part, some distance from Naples, was a cave, only accessible at low water.

At low water you could scramble over huge boulders of rock, and reach the entrance without wading through the sea.

But at high tide there was a considerable depth of water, up to the very edge of the hole which gave admittance to this hollow refuge for evil doers.

In this place Toro took refuge, nor did he rest until Barboni was placed in safety.

The cart was then allowed to be carried wherever the unguided horses chose to carry it.

A brigand was sent out with money to purchase from the peasantry some food, wine and tobacco, laden with which he returned in a couple of hours' time.

Barboni was deeply grateful to Toro for his brave rescue.

"Wait," he said, "until my sight comes back to me, and you will see that I know how to reward my friends."

"Whether you ever become yourself again or not," replied Toro, "you can be safe and cared for with me."

"I am rejoiced to think," continued Barboni, "that the cursed Inglesi will not have the proud satisfaction of seeing me perish on the scaffold. It was that which made me tremble."

"Captain! Captain!" exclaimed the man on guard at the mouth of the cave.

"Cospetto!" said Toro. "What is it, my lad? Are the hawks bearing down upon us?"

"Not so bad as that."

"Corpo di Baccho! What do you disturb me for about a trifle when I am talking to a greater brigand than ever you will be?"

"Holy Virgin, signor, you speak the truth there, and I am as proud as you can be to have his excellency, Barboni, with us. He does us too much honor."

"Tush! how you waste your time in jabbering. What's in the wind now?"

"I was scanning the bay with a telescope, when I saw a small boat rowed with two men. In the stern sits a third, who steers her."

"Well, my beard," laughed Toro, "there's a lot in that to wonder at."

"But that isn't all."

"Ah, that makes it a horse of another color; circumstances alter cases."

"Behind the little boat comes a big one rowed by six men, and it seems to be in pursuit of the little one."

"Diavolo," exclaimed Toro, fiercely, "that's not fair. What, six against two! No, no, this must be seen to."

"The pursued is trying to make the shore before the big boat can overhaul it, which is doubtful if it will be able to do," continued the brigand.

"I'll come out; how's the tide?"

"Coming in fast, signor, but you can reach the sands without trouble yet."

"Give me the glass," exclaimed Toro.

He took it, and advancing to the cave's entrance, scanned the horizon, and carefully examined the boats.

There could be no doubt that one boat was followed by the other, and the rowers in each were straining every nerve.

Suddenly Toro uttered a cry.

"Per Baccho!" he cried, "this is singular. The man who steers the little boat has but one arm. Can it be Lieutenant Hunston?"

At the mention of Hunston's name, Barboni pricked up his ears.

"Did you say that Hunston was in danger?" he asked.

"It appears to me."

"Let him take his fate, then," replied Barboni, savagely. "He has robbed and insulted me, abandoning me to chance. May his carcass rot on a dunghill."

"Nay," said Toro. "I don't like to see a bandit in difficulty; if he left you, he doubtless had his own little game to play. I'll go and see further into this matter."

Barboni sat down again.

He was unable to move about in a strange place without assistance.

He muttered to himself and cursed Hunston, employing the bitterest invectives against him and Bigamini.

His chief hope was that he would one day recover his sight, dig up his buried treasure, and travel in search of his late spy and lieutenant, so that he might shoot them down like dogs, and have his revenge upon them for their ill-treatment of him when helpless and friendless.

Meanwhile Toro slung his rifle over his back and descended to the sands, where he placed himself behind a rock and carefully scrutinized the two boats.

Both boats were nearing the shore, and not more than a hundred and fifty yards divided the two.

Desperate indeed were the efforts of the rowers. Those in the little boat were skilled waterman, and bent over their oars like galley-slaves, casting the spray high into the morning air.

At length Toro thought the time had come, and raised his rifle.

He fired, and one of the rowers in the big boat fell back mortally wounded.

This unexpected attack caused the greatest surprise and consternation among the rowers, who, panic-stricken, ceased their labors.

Rising in the stern, the coxswain of the police galley urged his men to persist in their work, which they did with evident reluctance.

Again Toro fired, and a second man fell, considerably slackening the speed of the craft.

Not liking the hidden fire, the men openly mutinied and refused to go any nearer the ambushade.

In vain their leader exhorted them to continue to do their duty; they turned the boat round and stood out to sea again.

A loud hurrah hurled defiance at them; the boat shot through the water; its nose grated against the sand, and a man stepped on shore. It was Hunston, who looked round for his deliverer, and saw Toro emerge from his place of concealment behind the rock.

"Is it you, my fine fellow?" exclaimed Hunston. "Cospetto! I owe my life to your friendly shots."

"You are welcome," replied Toro. "How did you happen to get into such a mess?"

"That is easily told. I had arranged to escape in a bark which is riding at anchor round the point, and those brave fellows agreed to row me to her at daybreak."

"I see," said Toro; "the police were down on you before you could get out of the harbor."

"You're right, and a precious hard row we had for it. I must have been taken had it not been for you; and now, my gay and gentle Toro, tell me the news. While I was skulking in a Tratoria

last night, I heard that Il Signor Barboni had escaped.

"Thanks to a little stratagem of mine he is safe."

"Where?"

Toro shrugged his shoulders, and looked doubtfully at Hunston.

"Per Dios," he replied. "I don't know how to treat you. The chief says you deserted him after using him badly, and what with the treachery of that infernal rascal Bigamini—may he burn eternally! and what with the danger about, I don't know who can be trusted."

Hunston laughed.

"You can put confidence in me, *mio caro*; if I am no longer a brigand, I am not a traitor. No, I never sold a pal in my life, and have lived too long to begin now," he answered.

"The chief is full against you, and if I take you to my cave there will be a tragedy if he knows you are there, and can pistol you."

"The old bat is too blind to be dangerous," replied Hunston. "Let me remain with you till night. I will make another try for the brig before the moon is up."

"Well, I'll trust you," answered Toro. "As for me, I've no malice against you."

Hunston spoke to the boatmen, telling them to hide the boat in some cove, go to an inn, and rest themselves till evening, and then await at the same spot after the night fell.

CHAPTER II.

THE WOLF AND THE CHILD.

BIGAMINI was afraid, after the murder of his wife, to return to Naples, and his idea was to tramp along the coast, until he came to some port where he was not known, hoping to get away in a ship to Genoa or Marseilles.

He took a little money out of his belt, and put it in his pocket to pay the expenses of the journey.

One of his accomplishments was playing on the flute, which he could do tolerably well, and seeing a beggar with one of those instruments, a little way out of Naples, he knocked him down and stole it.

Armed with the flute, he tore his clothes to make himself look as poor as possible, and slouching his broad-brimmed hat over his eyes, he thought he would pass as a strolling musician.

The fatigues and anxieties he had gone through of late made him long for a good night's rest, and reaching the cave which the cybil had inhabited, he resolved to indulge in as sound a slumber as his conscience would allow him.

Scarcely had he set foot inside the cave when a snapping and snarling noise warned him that it would be dangerous to intrude further, without making an examination into the cause of the strange sounds.

A steady look enabled him to see a wolf, who bared his gums and showed his teeth in a threatening manner.

"Hullo, my boy, I think I have seen you before," said Bigamini.

It was the witch's wolf, who had come back to the old place, but why he should prevent anyone from entering it was difficult to understand.

A childish voice suddenly exclaimed from the depth of the cave:

"Be quiet, you wolf, or I shall have to beat you. How cross you are to-night."

Bigamini's eyes twinkled.

"Here's a go," he said. "Blest if I ain't the luckiest cove out. It's Mr. Harkaway's kid. Here's a find."

Raising his voice aloud, he added:

"Master Jack."

"Who's that?" asked the child.

"I'm Mr. Monday's friend," called Bigamini. "You remember me; I have nursed you in the pantry."

"Oh, yes; I remember Bigamini. Have you come to fetch me home?"

"Of course I have."

"Come inside. It's very dark, but you'll soon get used to it, I have, and the wolf won't let me go out when he's here."

"Call off the wolf."

The child did so.

"Wolfey, wolfey," he said, "come here, sir!"

But the wolf wouldn't move, and kept on snarling, as if he thought the intruder had come to take the child away from him.

Young Jack, seeing this, walked to the entrance, and patted the wolf on the head, which quieted him a little, though he still kept his eye on Bigamini.

"He don't seem to hurt you," said the latter.

"Not he; I like him. He is a very good wolf, and when he took me away from the brigands, though I was frightened, he carried me here so carefully, and swam across the river with me in his mouth."

"Did he, though? It's a wonder he didn't make a meal of you."

"Has my papa killed the brigands?" asked young Jack.

"It's all up with them; they're done for."

"And I may go home now, I suppose?" replied young Jack.

"We'll start to-morrow morning, but we shall have a long walk. Your pa and ma have gone to another place."

"Oh, that's a bother," said young Jack. "But I don't mind a bit, so long as we get away from here."

Seeing the boy and Bigamini friendly, the wolf ceased his threatening demonstrations and began to think that it was all right.

Bigamini had some supper, which young Jack generously shared with him, and the two went to sleep, the wolf lying at their feet.

They were up with the sun in the morning, and prepared to start on their journey.

Child-like, young Jack placed implicit faith in his new friend, and thoroughly believed that he was going to take him home, when in reality, the rascal was going to do just the reverse.

He meant to take him to France.

His plan was to make Harkaway pay a heavy ransom for the restoration of his son.

They walked along the dusty road, young Jack holding Bigamini's hand, and the wolf trotting along by his side, determined not to lose sight of the boy.

It was a curious illustration of the fondness which savage animals sometimes take to human beings.

The wolf was comparatively tame, we must remember, and had lived with the witch many years as her pet.

Perhaps he felt the want of man's companionship.

He was more like a dog than a wolf, but in reality these two belong to the same species, and instances of tame wolves are by no means rare.

"Can you sing, Master Jack?" asked Bigamini.

"Yes," said the child, proudly.

"What?"

"Let dogs delight," and 'I have been there, and still would go.'"

"Those are hymns; they won't do. Could you learn a little Italian song, from an opera?" said Bigamini.

"What for?" asked young Jack.

"I've got a flute, and I'm rather short of money, so I thought that if I played and you sang, we could get some help along the road, because, as I told you, your pa and ma have moved, and we've a long way to go."

"Why didn't they give you money when you came after me?"

"They didn't know I was going, and I found you quite by accident."

"Oh! I see," said the boy. "Well, if we've got to get money, I'll learn a song."

"Try this—'Ah! che la morte.' It's from an opera, and very pretty. I'll play it for you."

He took out the flute from his pocket, and put the three pieces together.

Then he began to play, and though his knowledge of music was slight, he had the air on his mind, and acquitted himself very well.

Young Jack soon learnt the song.

It sounded very pretty in his childish treble, and Bigamini declared that they should be a great success, if they went on as well as they had begun.

CHAPTER III.

MR. MOLE HAS QUEER FANCIES.

WHEN Jack Harkaway came back to Naples, he was in high spirits.

Harvey, the little coxswain, and Clear-the-Track Sam were all in evening dress in the drawing-room.

They had recovered from the slight wounds they had received in the last encounter with the brigands, and were anxiously waiting to hear the news that Jack would bring with him from the environs of Torre Del Greco, whither he had gone to capture the chief.

Emily had dressed herself and come down to dinner for the first time since her child was stolen.

She was very pale and weak, but her face beamed with the smile of hope.

"Jack's late," said Harvey, looking at his watch. "It's a quarter past eight, and we dine at eight usually."

"Give him another quarter of an hour," said Walter, "if Mrs. Harvey has no objection."

"Not the slightest, Mr. Campbell," replied Hilda.

"I guess I'm too anxious for the news to be hungry," said Sam. "Who'd have thought the little spy would have split upon his master."

"It's always the way with low-minded ruffians," replied Harvey. "Take any police case in which some swell burglar is arrested; the police always say they took him from information they received. Some one rounds on his pal."

"My dear Richard," said Hilda, "what strong language to use before ladies."

"I beg pardon, my dear," replied Harvey. "I forgot you were here."

At this moment, Ada, Monday's wife, came up and asked if they would have dinner, as the cook said it was quite ready.

"Yes, if you please, Ada," replied Hilda; "I don't think Mr. Harkaway would wish us to wait any longer for him."

Ada went away to order dinner, and just as she came up to announce that it was on the table, Jack sprang up the stairs and bounded into the room.

"Hurrah! here is Harkaway," said the little coxswain.

"Gentleman," said Jack, pardonably excited at the news he had to communicate, "I have the pleasure to announce that our labors are ended, for Barboni is a prisoner and at this moment in the hands of the police on his way to a Neapolitan prison."

A cheer, such as only British throats can raise, rang through the room and was echoed again and again.

Even the ladies caught the infection, and clapped their hands at the glorious news.

Congratulations poured in upon Jack on all sides.

Nothing was talked about all dinner time but the capture of the brigand.

They little thought that a few hours later they were to hear of Toro's clever and gallant rescue.

The champagne flowed, and all was jollity and hilarity until the dessert was put on the table.

After a time the ladies retired, leaving the gentlemen to talk over their wine.

"I think," said Jack, "Monday will find the child and then we shall be able to return to England, victorious in everything."

"I'm sorry we didn't capture Barboni in the last fight," said Campbell.

"It would have been more satisfactory," replied Harvey.

"Won't the Neapolitans be wild, rather?" observed Sam. "I've got a lot of bets on with fellows at the Europa, and they don't want us to nail their brigand."

"Go and have your coffee, then, and collect your debts," said Jack. "Barboni will be in jail before long."

There was a noise in the passage, a crash, and presently in walked Mr. Mole, looking very gaunt, thin, and ghastly.

"By Jove! Mole's got loose," said Harvey.

"The deuce he has," remarked Jack. "We shall have a bother in getting him back again."

Looking sternly at the assembled company, Mr.

Mole seized a bottle and poured out some wine, which he drank.

Then his rigid countenance relaxed, and he said, with an imbecile smile:

"Here's to you, boys."

"Sit down, sir. Are you better?" asked Jack.

Mr. Mole's face clouded again, and he said, striking an attitude:

"Base menial! what means this revelry?"

"We're drinking your health, Mr. Mole."

"Mole, who's he? I know not the man," replied that individual. "Don't you know me?"

"No, we don't," said Jack, with a wink to his friends.

"None of you?"

"No," said Harry. "If you are not Mr. Mole I don't know you."

"Who is this Mole?" asked the professor.

"A friend of ours."

"No matter, let Mole go. I'll tell you in confidence who I am."

"Who?"

"I'm Mount Vesuvius in a state of eruption; at least, I am going to be in eruption presently, and if you don't pump on me, I shall burn the house down; that's why I've been drinking so much lately. I knew I was going to erupt, and I thought I'd put the fire out."

"We'll pump on you, sir," said Clear-the-Track; "I calculate I'm a good fireman."

"For Heaven's sake," replied Mole, "don't joke about this matter; it's getting very serious."

"Let's take the gentleman into the garden, and put him under the pump," suggested Sam. "I'll soon make apple squash of him."

Mole threw himself into an arm-chair, and took hold of a bottle, at which he sucked quietly.

"Come on," said the little coxswain; "we'll pump on you."

Mr. Mole's mood changed.

"Not to-day, baker, thank you," he replied, with a bland smile; "you can call to-morrow with a crusty cottage. I'm very comfortable, and a person of my consideration ought not to be molested by menials. Horace says, *dulce est desipere in loco*, which you may freely translate—it is sweet for a man to sip this wine. Let me sip."

Jack touched him on the shoulder.

"Come, sir," he said, "you must go with me."

"Must! That's a harsh word to employ to a king. Am I a captive monarch?"

"No foolishness."

"I am not aware that I have deserved this language. Who are you?" asked Mole.

"You know me well enough," said Jack.

Mole tapped his forehead.

"Are you the—the Shah?" he asked.

"No."

"Ah! then you are a Carthaginian. No matter, let me sip." He took another pull at the bottle.

"Put that down, sir," said Jack, authoritatively.

"Avaunt, Carthaginian!" said Mole, angrily, waving his hand.

"You must come with me."

"Let me sip," pleaded Mole.

"You've sipped long enough, and it's for your good that I want to keep you quiet for a few days. Come with me."

"Won't you let me sip?" asked Mole, pleadingly.

"Not now. Come to your room. I'll sit up with you."

"What! a jailer! A Carthaginian jailer," said Mr. Mole. "This is too much. Must Philip of Macedon, and the cousin of the King of Otaheite, put up with this?"

Jack turned to his friends.

"Run up to the Cafe Di Europa and see what the Naples swells think of the news, will you? and I'll look after Mr. Mole. He'll be all right if I keep him away from the lush for a few days," said Jack.

"All right," replied Harvey, "though I'll stop with Mole, if you'd like to go instead of me."

"No, thanks. Emily is very poorly, and she'd like to have me in the house with her."

The others departed, and with some difficulty, Jack got Mr. Mole up stairs to his bedroom, and sent for a doctor, who administered a sleeping draught to his patient.

This was very strong, and soon took effect upon Mr. Mole's weakened brain.

When Jack saw him in a sound slumber, he locked the door, taking care to remove a razor and a pair of scissors, lest he might injure himself in the night.

He visited his wife and found her much better; she begged him to go to the drawing-room and keep Lily and Hilda company, as she was going to bed, and she assured him that she would not mope any more and had determined to get well and strong again.

"There is an overruling Providence, Jack dear, and I have been punished for not putting my trust in it," she said.

"I only have you in the world to care for, my love," he said; "and you ought to get well, for my sake."

"I will, dearest."

"You don't know how it grieves me to see you like this," he added.

"Get me back my child and quit Naples; that's all the medicine I want," she replied.

"I hope to be able to do so soon," he said, kissing her affectionately.

He went down stairs and found Hilda playing and singing.

She selected Longfellow's "Excelsior," and when she had finished, she said:

"I always think of you when I sing that song, Mr. Harkaway."

"May I ask why?" asked Jack.

"Because, when you have killed a dozen brigands, you want to kill a dozen more. The meaning of the word, I think, is higher."

"Yes," said Jack.

"Well, you are always wanting to achieve something more than you have hitherto done."

"Thank you," said Jack. "I take it as a great compliment."

At this moment the little coxswain rushed into the room.

"What's ruffled your feathers, young one?" he asked.

"There's an awful row at the Cafe Di Europa; come up at once," was the reply.

"Yes."

"There are half a dozen Italians to one Englishman. I have left the fun to tell you."

"But Sam and Harvey?"

"Are fighting like bricks."

"By Jove! I'm on," said Jack.

The little coxswain was pale and excited.

Jack did not stop to say anything to the ladies.

He rushed away, put on his hat in the passage, and ran along the street with Walter.

"What's the row about?" he asked, as they pelted up the Strada Di Toledo.

"We were chaffing the fellows about catching the brigand, when the chief of the police came in and said he'd escaped," answered Walter.

"Impossible."

"It's true."

Jack's cheek blanched and he bit his lip angrily.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"They say this new brigand Toro surprised the soldiers while they were bivouacking."

"I wouldn't have had it happen on any account," said Jack. "What duffers these Italians are."

"That's what we said, and then they insulted us and called us thief-catchers, so we pitched in," said the little coxswain.

"I see."

"We were beginning to get the worst of it, and I set off to fetch you, thinking you wouldn't like to be out of it."

"Thank you. Come on," answered Jack, hurriedly.

Side by side they ran along until they reached the Cafe Di Europa, from the interior of which sounds of conflict proceeded.

Jack was eager and panting for the fray.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROW AT THE CAFE DI EUROPA.

WHEN Jack and Walter entered the cafe they found everything in confusion.

Some of the less excitable or more respectable

frequenters of the place looked on at the riot or tried to stop it.

But about half a dozen were fighting with Sam and Harvey, who had fixed their backs against the wall and were fighting as only Englishmen can fight.

As Jack put in an appearance, Sam made a rush, crying, "clear the track," and a couple of Neapolitans rolled over.

Fierce oaths and savage Italian cries rang through the room.

"Down with the English! Turn them out," was heard on all sides.

Jack took a calm view of the scene.

He saw that his two friends were outnumbered, and that they were being badly knocked about.

No amount of talking would have saved them, for the Italians were excited, and each recruit from the onlookers joined the heavy odds already arrayed against them.

"Do you feel fit?" said Jack to Walter.

"Never felt more like fighting in my life."

"Cut in, then."

Jack turned up his coat sleeves, put his hat a little back on his head, and shouting:

"Oxford forever!" attacked the nearest man.

It was like playing at ninepins directly Jack began.

His strong aim was like a poleaxe, and the Neapolitans resembled cattle in the shambles.

Harvey, hearing Jack's voice, plucked up, and it was time that assistance came, for brave as he was, he could not have held out much longer, as he was pretty well pummelled by the three or four men who were constantly striking at him.

In less than five minutes, the four friends had cleared that part of the room, and the Italians had had enough of it.

They stood glaring at their opponents and chattering like monkeys, afraid to begin again, though there were at least a couple of dozen of them.

One Italian drew a knife and brandished it in the air, exclaiming:

"I am not afraid of these brigand-hunting Inglesi. They fight like boatmen. We are gentlemen and cannot use our hands as they do. Will either of them have the courage to fight with a knife?"

There was a momentary silence.

"We do not use knives in England," replied Jack.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Italians, "they are cowards. Count Victor is right. They are afraid. Ha! ha! ha!"

Derisive laughter rang through the room and found an echo in every gilded corner.

"We will fight you with our fists, and beat you as we have done already, though you are six to one against us," said Jack.

"No, no; we can't fight with blackguards," answered Count Victor, whose dark flashing eye gleamed vengefully.

"The knife! the knife!" cried the Italians.

The aspect of affairs was becoming serious, and Jack saw that they would go with tarnished honor if the challenge was not accepted.

Clear-the-Track was cool and collected, seeming to enjoy the excitement which prevailed on all sides of him.

"I guess," he said, "that I know how to use that weapon, so if you'll let me tackle this fellow, Harkaway, I'll top him as a warning to the rest."

"It's my quarrel," replied Jack.

"No; it is not. You weren't here when it began. I reckon I commenced it."

But Jack was obstinate.

He would not give way.

"No," he answered. "They've fixed upon me, thank you all the same for your offer, and I do not feel inclined to show the white feather."

"Take my bowie, then," said Sam.

He handed Jack a handsome bowie knife, which opened with a snap, the advantage being that when the spring in the back had caught the blade, it held it fast.

The knife could not shut up again and cut his knuckles.

"Do you accept my challenge?" asked the count.

"I do," replied Jack.

Count Victor bowed politely in answer to Jack's acceptance of the challenge, and a scarcely perceptible smile crept round the corner of his well-cut mouth.

He considered that he had his antagonist at a disadvantage.

The count was a tall, thin, agile, well-made man, who was held in high esteem by his countrymen.

Taking off his coat and waistcoat, he tied a silk handkerchief round his waist, and turning up his right hand shirt sleeve, displayed a white, muscular arm.

Jack disdained to throw off anything, and prepared to fight as he was.

A space was cleared in the center of the room, the door was locked inside to prevent impertinent interference on the part of the public or the police.

The spectators formed a ring, and betting on the event became brisk, the odds being heavily and freely laid against the Englishman.

When everything was ready, the two men faced one another.

"Are you ready, signor?" asked the count, with perfect ease and politeness.

"Quite," replied Jack.

The duello then commenced.

Jack kept his eye fixed upon that of the Italian, which was bright, liquid, gleaming.

They faced one another for some time and gradually moved, the count going round Jack, and the latter turning slowly so as to keep him well in view.

At length the count came to close quarters.

He made a thrust at Jack, which the latter parried, but not without receiving a cut which ripped up his coat sleeve.

It was a fearful sight to behold those men, with their flashing knives throwing back the light of the many gas lamps, seeking who should spill the other's blood.

Neither the Italians nor the English spoke a word.

"Ha!" cried the count, forcing Jack's guard and thrusting at his heart.

Jack stepped hurriedly, and felt the point of the knife graze his skin; quickly he threw himself on the Italian, who, not having time to recover himself, presented his left arm to shield his body.

The knife's point ran up his arm from the wrist to the elbow, ripping up the shirt, and leaving a long red mark from which the blood fell on the floor in a hot, steaming stream.

The pent-up excitement burst out in a deep groan at this untoward hit.

Count Victor's face became convulsed with anger.

His equanimity vanished, and he was at once transformed into a savage, so furious was he at this lucky thrust, which, without crippling him, threatened to weaken him by loss of blood.

Jack now kept himself on the defensive.

His tactics were to exhaust his adversary, who, with demoniac howls, made frantic thrusts at him, springing wildly about, and sa-ha-ing like a professional swordsman.

In spite of his vigilance Jack received several small wounds, which drew blood, and made him smart with pain.

Jack saw that he was getting weaker, and he determined to use his great strength.

Accordingly he boldly rushed upon him.

He seized his wrist and held it as in a vise in his left hand, but the count managed to wriggle the edge of his knife near his opponent's body, and the blade, cutting through his clothes, grazed his ribs, inflicting a fleshwound.

But he was powerless after this, for Jack still held him tightly, and paused for an opportunity to strike him in a place which would not be fatal.

Accordingly he plunged his knife into the count's right shoulder, and the wretched man fell fainting to the ensanguined floor.

The useless knife dropped from his nervous hand.

With both arms disabled, he was obliged to give up the contest and own himself beaten.

Bestowing a proud look upon the Italians, Jack retired among his friends, and sat down.

As he walked, he left a trail of blood behind

him, for his clothes were saturated, and he was bleeding freely.

"Bravo, Jack!" exclaimed Harvey. "You did that in prime style. By jove! it's the most plucky thing I ever saw you do."

"Are you much hurt?" asked the little coxswain.

"I am battered a bit," replied Jack.

Sam approached with a cup of wine, which he handed to him.

"Heroes ain't above drinking, I guess," he said.

Jack drank the wine eagerly.

"Call a coach, Dick," he said to Harvey. "I must get home and stop this bleeding, or I shall be as weak as a rat to-morrow."

Harvey spoke to one of the waiters, who went in search of a fiacre.

Count Victor, meanwhile, had been raised by his disconsolate and chopfallen friends.

He was suffering the most acute agony from the two jobbing blows he had received in the shoulder, each of which had penetrated to the bone, and cut through important veins and muscles.

His oaths and curses were painful to listen to.

He called the saints to witness that he would have a fearful revenge for the defeat he had sustained.

One of the frequenters at the cafe was a doctor, and he attended to the count's wounds.

He had not the courtesy, however, to extend the offer of his surgical skill to Harkaway.

Presently the fiacre rolled up to the door.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said Jack. "I beg to thank you sincerely for the little amusement you have been so good as to offer me this evening. I shall not forget you, believe me."

The four men got into the coach, and were driven in a few minutes to the Strada Di Toledo.

When Jack was landed, Harvey set off again in search of a doctor.

Jack requested to be put in a room on the ground floor, so that the ladies might not be alarmed.

Especially he was anxious that Emily should not hear that he had been fighting a duel and was wounded, though in reality his hurts were not of a serious nature.

But a wife's ears are very sharp, and hearing the men come in, Emily became alarmed when Jack did not appear.

She had gone to bed, but quickly wrapping herself in a dressing-gown, she ran down stairs before anyone could stop her.

Jack had stripped to the waist, and Walter was busily engaged in sponging the cuts, having a basin of warm water on a chair, and counting the wounds.

"He's grazed you pretty well about the ribs, and touched you with the point, too, all over," said the little coxswain.

"How many digs has he given me?" asked Jack.

"I've counted fifteen. Got any below the waist?"

"One in the right thigh, I think. It feels stiff."

"That makes sixteen. What a fight it was, eh!" said Walter.

At this moment Emily entered the room.

She shuddered at the ghastly spectacle Harkaway presented, his naked body being cut about in a fantastic manner, and the blood issuing from the slashing wounds.

"Oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, tearfully.

"My dear Emmy," replied Jack, "this is wrong. You should not have done this."

"How could I help it? You know how I love you, dearest, and I feared something had happened. Are you dangerously hurt?"

"Chuck a towel or two over me, Walter," said Jack.

The little coxswain did so.

"There is no harm done, dear, beyond what a little diachylon sticking plaster will soon put right," he went on. "The doctor is expected every moment, so you mustn't fret."

"How did it happen?"

"The boys got into a row at the Cafe di Europa. Harvey and Sam were getting the worst of it, and

they sent for me. I am obliged to look after my boys, you know, Emmy."

"Well?"

"I had to polish off the 'furrineers,' and a Count Victor challenged me to fight with knives. He's sorry for it now."

"Is he dead?" asked Emily, trembling again.

"No. I might have killed him if I'd liked, mightn't I, young one?"

"Yes, twice over," answered the coxswain.

"Oh, Jack, dear, dear Jack, when will these troubles be over?" said Emily. "I am not so strong as I was once, and you are so brave that I never know what may happen. I am always nervous about you, and this place is killing me."

"We shall soon go away, my pet," replied Jack.

"Really?"

"Most certainly. All we have to do is to find the child, and see Barboni die on the scaffold, then ho! for England once more. By the way, have you seen Monday?"

"No, he hasn't returned yet, and his wife, Ada, is very anxious about him. Oh! Jack, this life amidst constant excitement may be very agreeable to you men, but it is death to poor, weak, little women."

Jack was going to reply, but a sudden faintness came over him.

He propped his head back, and gasped for breath.

"Ta—take her away," he murmured.

The next moment he fell back on the bed, and became insensible.

Brave and strong as he was, his constitution was not made of cast-iron, and he felt the inevitable effect of the loss of blood, pain and excitement.

Just then the doctor entered with Harvey, who conducted Emily to her own room, giving her in charge of Hilda and Lily.

Jack's wounds were attended to, he was put to bed, and the doctor had an interview with the anxious wife, assuring her that there was no danger, and quieting her fears.

CHAPTER V.

HUNSTON AMUSES AN IDLE HOUR.

WHEN Hunston was conducted to the cave by the sea-shore, Toro advised him not to say anything which might irritate Barboni.

"The old lion has had his claws cut," he remarked, "but there is a kick in him yet; he bares his gums, shows his teeth, and would bite if he could see where to plant his teeth."

"I'm not afraid of him," replied Hunston.

They made their way over the rocks and entered the cave, in which the brigands had prepared such a dinner as their desperate position would allow them.

Fish caught in holes of the rocks, and goat's meat plundered from the peasantry, did not make a bad meal, helped out with black bread and swine's flesh, and washed down with a draught of wine.

Barboni sat sullenly by himself, eating what was given him in silence.

At length he recognized Hunston's voice.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "I hear tones I used to know well. Is Hunstoni among you?"

"I'm here, *caro mio*," said Hunston. "Shake hands and be friends."

"You robbed and deserted me in my hour of need," said Barboni. "Is Toro here?"

"Not far off, old lion," answered the brigand.

"You are my friend? Have Hunstoni shot?" Toro laughed aloud and replied:

"No, no, we can't do that sort of thing. Hunstoni is my guest; he will go away again to-night, and his life is sacred in my eyes, as he has not been a traitor, and he has broken bread with me."

"Shoot the scoundrel!" roared Barboni. "Give me a pistol; I will rid the earth of a villain myself."

"Shut up, you old fool," said Hunston. "I'll put a bullet in you in a brace of shakes, you imbecile."

Barboni took up the glass he had been drinking out of, and threw it in the direction from which Hunston's voice proceeded.

Being blind, he could not take good aim; and it shattered itself against the adjoining rock.

"Don't destroy the crockery, Barboni," said Toro, mildly. "That's our only glass, and we shall have to drink out of the bottle now. Cospetto! you are not the Prince Di Villanova, in Castle Inferno. Where the deuce do you get your extravagant ideas from?"

Barboni sat down and covered his face with his hands.

"All are against me—all," he muttered, with a sob.

Hunston lighted his pipe, and drank some more wine.

"Been on the road lately," said Hunston.

"We've had no time since we rescued Barboni from the soldiers," answered Toro.

"It's devilish slow here," said Hunston; "suppose we amuse an idle hour?"

"I should like it. Per Baccho!" replied the giant, stretching his brawny limbs, "that is just what I want; laziness kills me."

"How are you off for cash?"

"But poorly. We have had no luck lately."

"What do you say to stopping the mail train, which passes a spot not far from here at mid-day?" said Hunston.

"Corpo di Christo!" swore the Herculean brigand, "that idea never occurred to me."

"Will you do it?"

"If you assist."

"I'll do more. I'll lead. It is my suggestion. You and your men come with me at once, armed with axes and revolvers, and I'll show you how to rob a train," said Hunston.

The brigand was delighted with the idea, and gave orders for his small band to be in readiness at once.

Barboni listened to all that was going on in a sulky sort of manner, and when he had gathered from the conversation that an expedition was being planned, his old spirit was warmed up and he was anxious to make one of the party.

To stop and rob the mail train was a grand enterprise, which was just the sort of thing he liked.

Now he felt the bitterness of being blind.

In the agony of his heart he said to himself:

"Better that I were dead than like this."

"We shan't be long, old lion," said Toro.

"I would give ten years of my life to go with you," replied Barboni.

"It is useless. You cannot see, and you would be in the way," remarked Hunston.

The brigands went away, leaving Barboni swearing like a pagan, half out of his mind, and vowing that he would have a fearful revenge upon Hunston before long.

Hunston had a time-table with him, which he had bought with a view of escaping by train, an idea he was forced to abandon when he found that the station was watched by the police to prevent any of the brigands from getting away.

A large tree grew close to the line, and Hunston calculated that if it was cut down, it would fall over the metals.

Pointing to it he said to the brigands who were armed with axes:

"Cut it down, quick; the mail is due in fifteen minutes."

Two men placed themselves on either side of the tree.

Soon the axes were raised high above their shoulders and flashed through the air, coming in contact with the wood, and causing a dull thudding echo to result.

"Hark!" cried Hunston, putting his hand to his ear.

The steady beat of the engine was heard, and the rattling of the train as it came through a cutting some miles off.

The train, the train!" exclaimed the brigands.

"Cut away for your lives!" cried Hunston.

The noise of the approaching train came rapidly nearer and yet more near.

At length it was visible at the edge of a curve. On came the panting Behemoth, dragging after it a dozen carriages and a guard's brake.

Crash!

The tree fell, and luckily tumbled across the line, where it completely blocked both the six foot and the permanent way.

There was a shrill whistle, prolonged and terrible.

The driver of the engine had seen the impediment in his path and turned on the steam whistle. Suddenly it ceased.

He merely meant it as a signal to the guard to put on the brake, and the next moment the steam was shut off and the engine reversed.

The engine driver and his mate, seeing that a collision with the tree was now inevitable, jumped off the engine.

Presently the train, going at a very reduced speed, struck the tree, and the engine bounded over it, coming to a standstill until the carriages bumped up against it and turned it on its side.

The brigands now rushed to the carriages.

Screams and groans came from every carriage, for though no one was killed, most of the passengers were badly bruised and knocked about.

Some had limbs broken by the terrible shock.

It was an easy task for Toro and his men to collect the valuables that the injured and panic-stricken passengers had about them.

Hunston directed his attention to the van, where he found the guard sitting on a box.

"What have you got there?" he asked.

"What you shan't have," replied the guard resolutely.

Hunston leveled his revolver at him and shot him dead.

"That's soon settled," he muttered.

His next care was to open the box, in which he found eight bags of gold, which he fastened together with a cord and slung round his neck.

The weight was so great that he bent under it.

"Retreat!" he shouted.

Toro and his men instantly left the ruined train and joined Hunston, who quickly led the way to the sea shore.

The passengers were unarmed, and had they not been, they were too much frightened and hurt to follow the robbers, who retired unmolested with their plunder.

When they reached the cave, the gold was divided in equal shares, as well as the jewelry, and Hunston was able to fill a second belt with his ill-gotten gains.

He was now a rich man.

But it was a question whether he would ever get away to enjoy it, as the coast was closely watched, and he had no doubt the police was on the lookout for him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STROLLING MUSICIANS.

WE must now devote our attention to Bigamini and young Jack, whom we left trudging along the road, under a hot and burning sun.

The first village they came to was a small one.

All the young and middle-aged men had gone to work in the fields, and only the women and old men remained with the children.

"Tootle! Tootle!"

Bigamini began to play on his flute, and a crowd of ragged urchins came round them.

The little fellow began to sing Verdi's melody "*Ah! che la morte*," and sang it plaintively and well in his childish treble.

In a whining tone Bigamini said:

"For the love of heaven give us some food; me and my boy are very poor and hungry. God will bless you, kind people, for your charity to the poor singers."

This appeal was productive of a very plentiful crop of bread and fruit, meat being scarce among the peasants, who had not enjoyed a particularly good harvest.

While they were eating their breakfast under a tree, not forgetting to feed the wolf, an incident happened which Bigamini did not bargain for—a black man passed by them.

He was apparently bent upon the same errand as themselves for he was nearly naked and looked like a beggar.

Bigamini no sooner cast his eyes upon the black man, than he hastily crammed his bread and fruit into his pocket and prepared to move.

"Come along, Master Jack," he said, in a low tone; we must not waste time; your papa and mamma are expecting you."

But young Jack's eyes were as sharp as his.

"I shan't go!" he cried. "That's Monday, papa's black servant."

"Nonsense!" replied Bigamini. "How could Monday get here? It's a boggy; look how all the people run away from him."

"Monday!" cried the child, "Monday!"

His further utterance was checked by a heavy box on the ears, which Bigamini kindly and paternally bestowed upon him.

"Hold your row," he said, "or I'll murder you."

The black, however, had heard the cry, and turned around.

It was Monday.

He saw young Jack, and with a yell of delight, rushed in his direction.

Monday had been on the tramp for several days and having started without any money, he found it difficult to procure food.

He was half starved.

The peasantry did not like the look of him; much rather would they have seen a brigand.

Being very superstitious, and unaccustomed to the sight of black people, they thought he was an evil spirit and would bring them no luck, so they drove him away very often with curses.

He had determined not to return home until he could bring his master some news of his missing child.

Many miles had he wandered.

At last good fortune brought him in the very nick of time to save the boy from the clutches of Bigamini, who would have taken him far away, so that he would not have gladdened his parents' eyes for many a long month to come.

Monday made a bound towards the tree, and cried:

"Ho! you Bigami thief, what do you do with young Mast' Jack?"

He caught the child in his arms and kissed him tenderly.

"Mast' Jack, Mast' Jack!" he said. "This one great day. Bless um little heart, um found him at last."

Bigamini had torn his clothes to rags, but he had not thrown away his pistol.

While the black was occupied with the child, he drew it, and leveling it in a hurry, fired.

Fortunately, the wolf, thinking he meant some harm to the child, jumped up and bit his arm.

The shot flew harmlessly over his intended victim's head.

"Cuss the luck!" muttered Bigamini.

Dropping the child, Monday flew at the wretched spy, and catching him in a powerful grasp, threw him against the trunk of the tree, where he fell stunned and bleeding.

Monday took the child's hand and retreated, saying:

"Come along, Mast' Jack."

Bigamini was frantic with rage and despair.

He followed at a distance, hoping that some accident would again throw the child into his power, and as he went, he bewailed his hard luck.

"Who'd have thought that cussed infernal black would have come up like a Jack-in-the-box to crab me?" he muttered, almost crying with vexation.

As they walked along, the child told Monday the history of his wanderings, and how he had made up his mind never to part with the wolf.

"You shall keep um wolf, sare," replied Monday.

"Is Bigamy a bad man?" asked young Jack.

"Him awful bad, sare; so bad, him like um debbil."

"Was he not taking me to see my papa?"

"No, him go t'other way, sare; me just come up in time. Bigamy is a brigand; he steal you, Mast' Jack."

His wanderings had made him well acquainted with the country, and he knew that they were not far from Pompeii, from whence there was a railway to Naples.

"Um got any money, Mast' Jack?" asked Monday, who recollected that he could not travel by railway, without paying the fare.

"I've got a gold piece with a hole in it tied

round my neck, which mamma gave me," replied Master Jack.

"Give um here."

"You can have it if you like, though I would rather not part with my mamma's present."

"Get plenty more, sare," said Monday, as he unfastened the coin, and going into the station took two tickets for Naples.

In a short time they arrived in the city, and made their way to the house in the Strada.

Jack was still in bed, his wounds being very stiff; and Emily was sitting by his side, holding a bunch of grapes for her husband to eat the luscious berries.

Suddenly Monday burst into the room, followed by young Jack and the wolf, who would not leave his little master for a moment.

"Here him come, sare," cried Monday, rapturously; "um found Mast' Jack and brought him back safe, sare."

The next moment he was clasped in his mother's arms, and she was shedding tears of joy over her lost one, now so opportunely found.

Jack was equally delighted.

"My darling! my darling!" cried Emily, covering his face with kisses. "I will never let you out of my sight again. Thank God for this."

Jack held out his hand to Monday.

"I can never thank you enough," he said.

"That al' right, Mast' Jack," said Monday. "Um say not come back without him. Just in time, though; that debbil Bigamini got him."

The black proceeded to tell all he knew, and the wolf, as if he thought he ought to be taken some notice of, jumped on the bed.

"Oh! the horrid creature," cried Emily; "kill him, he will injure my child; kill the wild beast."

"No, mamma," said young Jack; "that's my pet. You mustn't kill him."

Young Jack patted the wolf on the head, and the animal licked his hand affectionately.

All Emily's fear vanished when she heard how kind the creature had been to the boy, and she even ventured so far as to pat and stroke him herself.

All was rejoicing and happiness in the house now.

Jack was soon able to get up.

"All we have to do now," he said to his friends, "is to bring Barboni to the scaffold, and then we can quit Naples with the full consciousness of having kept our vow, and swept away the curse of brigandage from this fair country."

Emily sighed when she heard this.

A determination to hunt to the foot of the scaffold the desperate man already driven to bay, meant exposure to fresh perils, and she knew not what misery in the future.

"Is it not enough that you have crippled his power, destroyed his band, and he is blind and helpless?" she said.

"No."

"What more do you want?"

"The villain's life."

"He deserves to die for his crimes, and no doubt vengeance will overtake him in time. Cannot you leave Barboni's punishment to Heaven?" she asked.

"I believe, my dear," said Jack, "that I am the chosen instrument in the hands of Heaven, and I will not give up until he dies upon the scaffold."

"Cannot you find out where he is hiding?"

"Up to the present time, all our efforts have been baffled, but we hope to be successful soon."

"He seems to be quiet enough," remarked Emily.

"Yes, but the fire is only smouldering. Such men as Hunston and Toro cannot keep quiet long. They will do something violent soon, and then we shall get scent of the old fox's hiding-place," said Jack.

As if to give confirmation to his words, the little coxswain entered.

"Great news!" he said.

"What?"

"A band of brigands, led by two men, who answer the description of Toro and Hunston, have stopped the mail train, and robbed the passengers, murdered the guard, and carried off a lot of gold in bags."

"By Jove!" said Jack, "just what I expected."

"They threw a tree across the line, and many of the passengers are seriously injured," cried Walter.

"Where did this happen?" asked Jack.

"Not far from Portici."

"Ah, that is a direction in which we have not searched; we have stuck too much to the old lines. Kiss me, Emily. We shall soon have them all, now; this is what I have been waiting for."

Young Jack put his hand on his father's knee.

"You going to fight Barboni, papa?" he said.

"Yes, my lad," replied Jack, patting his curly head.

"You take me and my wolf, will you?"

"Not this time," said Jack, with a smile.

Young Jack looked deeply disappointed, and Emily caught him in her arms, straining him to her breast, as if she feared the brigands might again tear him from her.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ESCAPE OF HUNSTON.

A JAR of brandy had been brought out of a corner by Toro, and the brigands drank deeply after their success in robbing the train.

Hunston's health was proposed and heartily received.

The only one who did not share in the general hilarity was Barboni.

He sat sulkily aloof at the extremity of the cave, and seemed to be as deaf to all that was going on around him as he was blind.

It galled him to think that he could not participate in the expedition of Toro.

Utterly disregarding him, the others continued their carouse.

Hunston became elated with drink.

Seizing Toro's hand, he exclaimed:

"I like you, Bill."

"And I like you, *caro mio*," replied the herculean brigand.

"Are you particularly fond of this place?"

"Not over much."

"You are not wedded to it; you haven't planted yourself to grow up into a full-blown gallows bird when the Bersaglieri catch you," continued Hunston.

"I suppose that is what I must expect to be some day or other, but it is not kind of you, signor, to remind me of my probable destiny," said Toro.

He shrugged his shoulders as a scarcely perceptible shudder crept over him.

"Would you like to leave Naples?" said Hunston.

"If you get away safely to-night, what are your plans?" asked Toro, evading the question.

"I've altered them," said Hunston, lowering his voice so that Barboni could not hear what he said.

"Well?"

Toro evinced considerable curiosity to hear what his companion had to say.

"I have arranged a passage in a brig lying off the point," said Hunston. "She is laden with wine and oil; her crew are only eleven hands all told."

"Well?" ejaculated Toro, again.

"I meant to have taken my hook in her to England, but if you and your men will come with me we'll play a bigger game."

"Ha!" said Toro, who began to see.

"We will cut the throats of the crew, and chuck their bodies overboard."

"Good."

"Having possession of the vessel, we can go where we like, and if we cook up fictitious papers, no one will suspect us if we get a few thousand miles away."

"But," said Toro, "I am no sailor."

"What of that?"

"Nor my men either. On land they are as brave as lions, but on board ship"—

"Humbug. I tell you," interrupted Hunston, with a gesture of contempt. "I am an old salt, and I'll work the ship if you and your fellows do what I tell them."

"You may rely upon that," replied Toro.

"Do you like the plan?"

"In a word," said Toro, "you propose that we should turn pirates."

"Not exactly. We will trade when it suits us

and we will rob when it is more convenient," continued Hunston.

Toro then engaged in earnest conversation with his men for a short time, and his arguments did not fail to convince them of the advantage held out in Hunston's scheme.

They jumped at the chance of having a ship of their own and sailing on the bright blue sea.

"It's all right," replied Toro, returning. "I knew the fellows would follow me anywhere."

"Are they all agreed?" asked Hunston.

"All."

"Here's jolly good luck to our new venture," said Hunston, emptying his glass.

"I have always been kind to my men," exclaimed Toro; "they love me as a father."

"Barboni made a mistake in always being a tyrant and a bully. He thought no more of shooting a man than he did of eating his dinner," said Hunston.

"He had a larger band than mine," observed Toro, "and brigands are hard to manage."

"No matter, kindness goes a long way."

"What about Barboni?" asked Toro.

"Oh, let him rip. What's the good of the old owl?"

"Won't you take him?"

"You'll ask me to tie a corpse to my neck next," answered Hunston, with a brutal laugh.

"I don't quite like the idea of Barboni being left here to starve," remarked Toro.

"What does it matter to us?" replied Hunston.

"Well, well, it'll be hard."

"That's your sort, my sucking Hercules. I can see I shall make something of you by-and-by," said Hunston.

The brigands received their orders in a low tone, which were to go down to the beach and wait for the appearance of the boatmen, who had been heavily bribed to once more undertake the perilous task of conveying Hunston to the brig which was lying outside the Possillippo point.

Hunston accompanied them.

Toro was the last to leave the cave, and he had lingered for a purpose of his own.

There was much to admire about the character of the "old lion," as he call Barboni.

For years the name of Barboni had been a name of terror throughout the whole Italian peninsula.

When Toro was comparatively a young man, his blood had been fired by hearing stories of the daring and bravery of Barboni.

Had he never heard of Barboni, perhaps he might never have become a brigand.

To the young Italian the "old lion" was a hero of romance.

It cut him to the heart to leave him penniless, friendless, and alone.

The chief, once so mighty, now so fallen, was sitting disconsolately at the end of the cave.

He was inwardly chafing at his lot.

His lips moved and twitched, his fists were clenched, and his brows bent over his eyes.

Toro came up to him, and touched his shoulder.

"Old lion," he said, in his rough, cheery voice.

"Ah! Toro," he said, "is it you? I have one friend left in you; all the others have deserted me."

"Good old lion," replied Toro, "take this; it is"—

"Money," cried Barboni, hastily. "What is this for?"

"You will want it. I'm going away for—some days, and you'll have to shift for yourself."

"Going away—going to leave me," said Barboni, terrified. "This is Hunston's doing, Corpo di Baccho. I warmed a serpent when I took him in. But why should you go? What have I done?"

"Nothing."

"No offense?" asked Barboni.

"None, old lion. Duty calls us. You will find stores in the cave enough for a month. In this locker you shall find ship's biscuits; in this other, wine and spirits; and in this, salt beef. The money is for you when all is gone."

"You have told me a lie," said Barboni, sadly; "you said you were going for a few days on some duty. You tell me I have provisions for a month;

and then add that the money is for my use when the provisions are gone."

"Cospetto, old lion!" stammered Toro, "you're rather sharp upon a fellow."

"No matter," replied Barboni. "I know that I'm left to my fate in my hour of need. No longer pipe, no longer dance. That is the way of the world. Go, good Toro. I thank thee from the bottom of my heart."

"You see, old lion," said To., "if you weren't blind"—

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Barboni, solemnly. "Never remind a man of the afflictions sent him by heaven. Perhaps my blindness is a punishment for what men call my crimes. No matter, I am not yet conquered, and I tell you, good Toro, that my heart is big enough to bear this blow."

"Bravo, old lion; give us your paw."

"I will shake hands with you, for you are good to me," said Barboni, jingling the gold in his left hand.

There was a pause.

"Adieu!" said Barboni in a low tone.

"Good-bye, old lion; good luck to you. Keep up your spirits," said Toro.

The next minute he was hurrying over the rocks in the direction taken by the others.

Punctual to the appointment, the two boatmen were on the spot, nor were they surprised to see the friends that Hunston had brought with him.

The chase of the preceding night had frightened them not a little, and the more there were to fight the police in the event of a fresh pursuit, the better for them.

A vigilant look-out was kept, but nothing was seen of the police galley.

An hour's pull brought the boat to the corner of the point, and the silver moon enabled the rowers to see the brig lying at anchor within the distance of a mile.

"Pull away, lads. That's our ship," said Hunston, standing up and handling the tiller with a practiced hand.

"Viva Hunston! e Tori! Viva! viva!" cried the brigands in chorus.

The two boatmen looked curiously and suspiciously around.

They knew that they were helping a brigand to escape, and guessed that his companions were of the same cut-throat trade.

It was evident, also, that some villainy was in contemplation, but as they were well paid for what they were doing, it mattered little to them what happened.

Their orders were concise.

"Pull alongside," said Hunston, "and when you see the last of me in the chains, drop astern."

"Aye, aye, signor," replied the head boatman.

Each man had received his instructions before starting.

It was determined that an attack should be made in the night when the crew should be off their guard.

The ship did not sail before morning, and it was probable that the captain was enjoying his last hours ashore in some trattoria with his officers and a boat's crew.

This surmise of Hunston's turned out correct.

The ship was neared.

A man on the look-out said, in a drowsy voice: "Boat ahoy?"

"Ahoy there!" replied Hunston.

"What are you?"

"We bring you a passenger who hasn't forgotten the grog, and you'll be able to splice the main-brace before the captain comes aboard."

"You're welcome, shipmate," replied the look-out; "steer by her headlight. So, larboard side, ship your oars. So. Gently does it."

The brigands held their knives in their mouths, and headed by Hunston and Toro, sprang up the chains like monkeys.

The watch was crowded round to welcome the passenger who had been so considerate as to bring his grog with him.

What was their consternation when they were fiercely attacked and cut down without the slightest warning or provocation.

One after another fell mortally wounded.

Not a word was spoken by the brigands, who

went at their bloodthirsty work with the coolness of practiced butchers.

The deck was cold with blood.

Hearing the heavy falls, the mate and the remainder of the crew rushed up the mainhatch only to meet with the awfully sudden fate of their ill-starred companions.

They were hacked to pieces, and being unarmed, were unable to strike a blow in their own defense.

When the butchery was over, Hunston ordered the bodies to be cast overboard.

An examination of the ship was then made.

Only a cabin-boy was found asleep in the fore-castle, and his life was spared, because he was too young to be mischievous, and it was thought he might be useful.

In fact they derived some valuable information from him.

The captain and five others were ashore, but were expected at the ebb of the tide, which would take place about four in the morning.

It was then eleven.

A strong breeze had sprung up from the land, and Hunston ordered the sails to be set immediately.

There were two Italian and some foreign men-of-war in the bay, and it would have been dangerous to remain and court notice from them.

The brig could make good sailing, but she would have succumbed easily in a few hours to a powerful steamer.

The anchor was weighed, the sails set, and the ship glided unperceived from the spot where she had been lying.

Hunston took command of the vessel.

As for Toro, he was a complete child upon the ocean, though he could do a great deal on land.

It must be admitted that he was willing to aid Hunston, and that he did not feel at all jealous at being second in command.

Before daybreak the ship was far from the Italian coast.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. MOLE'S DISCOVERY.

On the morning following the shocking crimes we have just narrated, a very happy party was assembled round the breakfast-table of the house in the Strada Di Toledo.

Everything had gone well lately with the English.

The roses had returned to Emily's cheeks since the dispersal of the brigands and the restoration of her darling child.

She was quite well and strong again.

It had come about that Lily Cockles was so pleased with the little coxswain for avenging her brother's death by killing Gus Darrell that she listened favorably to his suit.

They were engaged to be married.

Mr. Mole was quite well again, and his illness acted as a warning to him not to drink too much, and he very rarely plunged into excess, and then only when he spent an evening with Monday in his pantry, talking about old times.

Monday came in while the party were at breakfast.

Everybody looked up eagerly.

"What's that?" asked Jack.

"Me go out this morning, sare, to buy some of um fish for breakfast, and they all talk about brigands taking um ship."

"Capturing a ship! Where?"

"In um bay, sare. They kill all um could, 'cept captain, and two three others who on shore, and then they bolt with um ships. So um say."

"By Jove! that must be Hunston," said Harvey.

"Shouldn't wonder," replied Jack; "the news, though, requires confirmation."

"I wonder," said the little coxswain, "if they have taken Barboni with them."

"Trust Hunston for not being a fool," answered Jack. "He wouldn't be bothered with a blind man who could never do him any good."

"Hunston was always a hard-hearted and perverse child of sin," remarked Mr. Mole.

"Well, gentlemen," said Jack, "I must go out

and hear the news; who'll come with me? Don't all speak at once."

"I will," replied Harvey and Sam in a breath.

"I have promised to go with Mr. Mole," said Walter; "we have a little geological expedition on hand."

"What's that?" asked Jack.

"Geology," replied Mr. Mole, "as you ought to know, Harkaway, is the science or 'logic' of the earth, from the Greek word"—

"In fact," interrupted Jack, "you mean you're going to break stones with a hammer, and see what's inside them."

"That's it," replied Walter, laughing.

The party broke up.

Emily took Jack on one side.

"Have you written a reply to the colonel?" she asked.

"No, dear," he replied.

"What shall you say?"

"I intend to throw up my commission," he answered.

"Oh!" said Emily, "I'm so sorry. Is it not a pity you let this wretched brigand interfere with your professional prospects?"

"I can't help it, Emmy, dear," said Jack. "I must keep my oath, and I don't leave Naples till I see the end of that villain Barboni."

"But"—

"That's flat. It's no use talking."

Emily knew Jack's determined character too well to argue the point with him, and she walked away with a sigh.

Mr. Mole and Walter supplied themselves with a couple of hammers, and a basket in which to place specimens of valuable fossils they might be fortunate enough to find, and started for a walk along the shore.

After walking a few miles several specimens of remarkable fossils were collected, and the rocks becoming rather difficult to travel over, the little coxswain proposed a halt.

Selecting a shady spot, he lighted his pipe, and producing a flask, the geologists refreshed themselves.

"I have had enough of it!" exclaimed Walter, "and shall stay here until you are done."

"Very well," replied Mr. Mole. "I'll just explore the rocks about here, and then we will return."

"Look out for brigands," said Walter. "It was somewhere near this spot that the police galley was attacked."

"I never felt fear in my life," said Mole, grandly, "and I am not going to begin now."

He climbed over the rocks, holding an umbrella to protect his head from the burning sun, until he came to an opening in the rock.

It was the mouth of the cave.

The opportunity seemed favorable for exploring, and satisfying himself that the water was low, and would not come up high enough for some hours to cut off his retreat, he boldly entered.

A good light poured into the cave, which enabled Mr. Mole to see that there was a man seated on a block of stone at the extremity.

"Who goes there? Is it you, good Toro?" said the man, whose quick ears detected the sound of an intrusion.

"I am not Toro," replied Mr. Mole.

"Who are you, then—friend or foe?"

"That depends upon who you are," said Mole.

"Don't attempt any nonsense; I've got a pistol."

"I am unarmed," was the reply, with an impatient sigh, "and were my belt bristling with weapons, I could do you little harm, because I am blind."

"Blind!" repeated Mole, starting.

He had heard that the famous brigand had lost his sight and was the companion of Toro.

Could his good fortune have guided his footsteps in the direction of the brigand chief?

If so, he would have accomplished what neither Harkaway nor all the police in Naples had succeeded in.

"Are you Barboni?" asked Mole.

"I am that unfortunate being," was the calm reply.

The brigand drew himself up with dignity, folded his arms, and turned his sightless orbs in the direction of the intruder's voice.

"Hang me if I didn't think so," said Mole.

"Won't Walter be wild when he finds he is out of this? Bravo, Mole, this is a feather in your cap, sir."

"Do with me what you like," said Barboni.

"It requires consideration," replied Mole. "Are you alone?"

"Quite."

"You are sure that none of your cut-throat associates are likely to come back?" asked Mole, exhibiting a slight nervousness.

"There is no chance of that. They have all left me."

"All?"

"Every one," said Barboni.

"Can you give me any information respecting a party of the name of Hunston, with whom I was formerly acquainted?"

"He has gone with Toro, after insulting and robbing me."

"Ah, he was always a bad lot," said Mr. Mole.

"You speak Italian with a foreign accent," said Barboni. "Are you English?"

"I am."

"Then, sir," said Barboni, "I suppose my hour has come. I may as well die at once as linger on in misery, to perish of neglect and starvation, aggravated by a broken heart."

"I feel sorry for you," said Mole.

"Does that sentiment come from your heart?" asked Barboni, eagerly.

"Certainly it does. I once saw a wounded lion, and at another time an eagle with a broken wing. Those creatures were types of fallen grandeur in their way, and I felt sorry for them."

"I should like you to do me a favor. It will be the last I shall ever ask of mortal man," said Barboni.

"Name it."

"Let me explain first why I make the request."

"Certainly," replied Mole.

"I should like to avoid a public execution, following upon a tiresome trial, and it would give me pleasure to baulk Mr. Harkaway of his triumph."

"Yes, yes; that is only natural."

"Will you, sir, take out your pistol, place the muzzle to my head as I sit here, and finish me out of hand?"

"No," replied Mole, decisively, "I will not."

The expression of hope which had lighted up the brigand's face died out, leaving his features a blank again.

"You refuse?"

"Decidedly I do, and for this reason. I never, in the course of all my wanderings, took a life in cold blood."

"But I ask you to take mine," urged Barboni.

"That makes very little difference, and scarcely removes the affair from the crime of deliberate murder," said Mole.

"Say no more; I am your prisoner. Load me with chains and drag me in triumph into Naples. It will be a glorious deed to have captured the poor, blind brigand."

The sarcasm was not lost upon Mole.

"You judge me wrongly again," he said.

"How?"

"By supposing that I should be guilty of such meanness."

"Speak plainly, man!" cried Barboni, impatiently, and do not torture me with suspense. What are you going to do with me?"

"I shall leave you as I found you."

"But you will send the police here."

"Not at all. I pity you as a fallen foe, and I respect you as a brave man, though you have outraged humanity," said Mole.

"Sir," replied Barboni, "I thank you; your generosity is that of a true-bred gentleman."

"I am not a preacher," continued Mole. "But there is such a thing as repentance."

"I never repented any one act of my life," replied Barboni, fiercely.

"Consider," said Mole, "that forgiveness of sins is"—

"Rubbish! *Santo Dio!* am I a woman to listen to such tales? Go, sir, leave me to my misery and my solitude. I would be alone."

"I wish you a happy issue out of all your afflictions," said Mole, kindly.

He was about to retire when the brigand spoke.

"Your name, sir?" he said.

"My name is Mole."

"Thank you. It shall be the last on my lips, and I shall remember it as that of a generous and true gentleman. *Adio, amico mio.*"

Mr. Mole now left the cave, very much excited at the strange scene which had just taken place.

It had cost him a struggle to forego the capture of the brigand chief.

But the higher qualities of his nature had asserted themselves, and he thought he should have been a coward to betray the poor, broken-down, blind creature into the hands of his enemies.

When he reached the little coxswain, the latter saw that something unusual had happened.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Up the rocks," replied Mole.

"I lost sight of you."

"Very likely."

"I say, you have had a bad scare; what have you seen?" asked Walter.

"Don't ask me any questions," replied Mr. Mole.

"Now, look here, what is it?"

There was no answer.

"Brigands?"

Still Mr. Mole was silent.

If he answered he would betray Barboni, and he intended to keep the secret.

"If you won't speak, you'd better go home," said Walter.

"That's what I mean to do," replied Mole; "you will come with me, of course."

"No."

"You won't?"

"Not just yet. I want to finish my pipe."

"All right, I will leave you," said Mole, glad of a chance of getting away without being subjected to further questioning.

He did not think it likely that Walter Campbell would explore the rocks, or, if he did, that he would find the cave.

But this was just what the young gentleman intended to do.

Walter for a little time lazily watched the smoke curl up from the bowl of his pipe, and listened to the noise made by the incoming tide, as the waves beat restlessly on the shore.

But when Mole was out of sight, he got up and stretched himself.

Two men in a boat were rowing along towards Naples.

They were boatmen on the look-out for a fare.

Seeing Walter extend his arms, they thought he was signaling them to stop.

"Want a boat, signor?" said one. "Take you back to Naples for three ducats."

"Done, with you," said Walter, glad of the chance. "But first of all, beach your boat and come here."

The two men did as he directed them, and advanced, respectfully saluting him by touching their caps.

"Follow me up these rocks," he said.

The men hesitated.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked.

"They say there are brigands up there, signor?"

"Where?"

"In a cave."

"As I suspected," replied Walter. "Well, stay where you are till I come back."

He looked at his pistol, saw it was capped and ready for firing.

Then he climbed over the rocks in the direction he had seen Mr. Mole take.

After a time he came to the entrance to the cave and peered in.

He saw a man whom he instantly recognized as Barboni.

The brigand was groping about the cave as if he wished to find something.

At last he uttered a cry of joy.

His hand had come in contact with a pistol, and he clutched it eagerly, feeling the nipple to see if there was a cap on it.

"At last! at last!" he said. "I can now do what the generous Englishman refused. Barboni shall die by his own hand."

The little coxswain understood the situation in a moment.

Barboni was going to commit suicide.

He was just in time.

Had he been a few minutes later, he would have

found nothing but the gory corpse of the great brigand chief, and a smoking pistol by his side.

Raising himself on a level with the ledge, he crept along as noiselessly as a cat after a bird.

Barboni presented the pistol to his head.

The next moment Walter was upon him with a bound.

A vigorous blow sent the pistol flying to the further end of the cave before he could draw the trigger.

"No, you don't," he said.

Barboni was baffled.

"Ha!" he cried; "who is this? May a curse light on you for this."

"I am the little coxswain, my tulip," was the reply; "and you've got to come with me to Naples; I've got a boat waiting, and we shall do it in style."

Barboni groaned.

"Never, never!" he said, furiously. "I will die first! Stand on one side; let me throw myself over the rocks."

Walter did not hesitate a moment.

He threw him on the blind man and tried to hurl him to the earth.

A fearful struggle ensued.

Locked in one another's arms, they rocked to and fro like poplars in a storm.

At length Barboni's foot slipped, and he fell heavily on the back of his head.

For a time he was stunned.

Rushing to the mouth of the cave, Walter beckoned to the boatman.

"Come here," he said. "I have captured Barboni; done it all myself; there's no danger. Come at once; you shall be well rewarded."

The men talked together for a moment, and then they decided to go.

Reaching the cave, they helped to bind the brigand's arms, and with considerable exertion they carried him to the boat.

He was placed in the stern sheets.

Walter took the tiller, and the men rowed with a will to Naples.

Barboni was in a state of semi-consciousness, and neither moved nor uttered a sound.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPY'S FATE.

WHILE this important capture was being made by the little coxswain, an event of great interest was taking place on the other side of the city.

Jack, Harvey and Clear-the-Track Sam had wandered into the country, after gleaning all the news they could respecting the seizure of the brig and the massacre of the crew.

It was the general opinion that Hunston and Toro had got off in the vessel.

Two ships-of-war were dispatched in pursuit, though the chances of Hunston's capture was slight, as it was impossible to say what direction he had sailed.

Jack and his friends had lately made it their custom to preambulate the country, and question the peasantry, in the hope of obtaining some information which would lead to the discovery of Barboni.

They were all anxious to get home.

The chase was becoming tiresome and monotonous now; everyone wishing to end it.

That the old fox was hiding somewhere they had no doubt.

But in what locality no one could say.

The road they had selected on this occasion was by the shore.

Suddenly Harvey said:

"I see some one coming towards us."

"Where?" asked Jack.

"Right ahead. He's dodging behind those rocks; look out. There he is again."

But though Jack looked, he could not see any one.

"He's up to no good if he's dodging us, that's certain," he said.

"It looked like Bigamini," cried Harvey.

"Nonsense."

"It did. The fellow had just his cut and slinking walk."

"I should jolly well like to put my finger upon that gentleman," said Jack.

"So should I, the scoundrel. He's worse than Barboni by a long chalk," replied Harvey.

"Look, look!" said Clear-the-Track, "he's bolted. See him scudding along; I guess he's powerful frit."

"Unslung your rifle."

Sam did so.

He was the only one who had brought a rifle with him.

"Shall I drop him?" he asked.

"If you can."

"Guess I'd drop a fly at three hundred yards steady does it."

Sam dropped on one knee, and took a steady aim.

"Don't kill him," said Jack. "Put a ball in his leg."

"Right."

The little man, whoever he was, had smelt danger in the air, and was running along the sand at his best pace.

The American fired.

There was a sharp cry, and the runaway fell flat on his face, uttering such horrid yells, that it was easy to tell that he was not killed.

The three friends ran up quickly.

It was as Harvey had conjectured.

The shrieking wretch writhing with pain before them, was Bigamini, the spy of the brigands, the traitor who had betrayed them on every occasion.

His hand was red with a dozen murders, and his worthless life forfeited over and over again to the law.

He had been crawling along the sea-shore, hoping to find a boat which would take him to some ship in the bay.

But Nemesis had dogged his heels closely.

He had fallen into the hands of his enemies when he least expected it.

"What did you want to go and shoot at me as if I was a sand-martin, or a rabbit?" he moaned.

"Are you hurt?" asked Jack.

"Oh, Lord! ain't I? Wish you'd got it, begging your pardon, Mr. Harkaway," sir, rejoined the spy.

"Where?"

"The ball lodged in my—my end, sir."

"He means in the seat of honor," said Sam, with a laugh; "I aimed too high."

Bigamini was shot in the fleshy part of his back. He rolled over and over, scratching at the sand, and moaning dismally.

"What's to be done with him?" asked Jack.

"Oh, spare me, sir; spare me, Mr. Harkaway," cried Bigamini. "I'm only a wretched Bigamini, sir. Once I was a happy"—

"Silence!" thundered Jack.

"Let's try him by court-martial," said Clear-the-Track.

"Very good idea. I'll be judge," said Jack.

"I prosecute, and Harvey shall defend the prisoner," said Sam.

"Let him lie there," continued Jack. "I'll sit on this rock. Now, Clear-the-Track, you start."

Sam laughed and drew himself up, while Bigamini, who did not know whether this was a joke or not, stopped his howling.

His cunning gray eyes watched first one and then the other, with the most intense interest.

"May it please this honorable court," began Sam, "I appear for the prosecution of the prisoner at the bar. His name is Bigamini, and he's the biggest villain unhung, I guess."

"Order," said Jack.

"By the court's pardon I will say that the prisoner was the spy of Barboni, the brigand."

"He made me do it, gentlemen," whined Bigamini.

"Silence!" roared Jack.

"He betrayed us to Barboni, and is responsible for Tom Carden's death."

"I never touched him, sir," said Bigamini.

"Si—lence! Kick him, Dick, if he won't be quiet."

"Oh, my latter end!" groaned Bigamini; "if you had a bullet in your end, you'd squeal a bit, gentlemen."

"The prisoner at the bar," continued Sam, "murdered his wife. He also stole young Jack, and I think he deserves to die."

"Oh, spare me, gents, spare me," cried Bigamini.

"Do you plead guilty?" asked Jack.

"Yes, sir, I'm guilty, but"—

"That's enough. I don't think I need call on the learned counsel for the defense after this admission."

"I bow to the decision of the court," said Harvey.

"It only remains for me to pass sentence," continued Jack.

There was a dead silence.

Bigamini trembled all over.

He saw that this was not a ghastly joke, but a terrible reality.

Soon it would end in an awful tragedy.

His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth with terror, and he nearly fainted.

"The sentence of this honorable court is, that the prisoner, Bigamini, spy, murderer and abductor of children, who has just pleaded guilty to the several charges in the indictment, shall be condemned to death," said Jack.

He paused.

"Have you anything to say, prisoner, why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?" he added.

Bigamini said nothing.

He only stared stupidly with his twinkling eyes.

"You shall be buried at low watermark, and be gradually drowned," continued Jack, "so that you may have time to repent, and may heaven have mercy upon your soul."

Harvey and Sam nodded their heads, to intimate that they thoroughly approved of the sentence.

The three friends looked about for some shells with which to dig a hole in the sand big enough to receive the culprit's body.

Bigamini turned his head and watched them like one in a dream.

Neither spoke a word.

They were all terribly in earnest.

The spy was bleeding slowly from his wound, and the red blood sank into the thirsty sand.

But neither pain nor fright could wring a sound from him now.

His mind was stunned.

At a moment when he hoped to get off with all his money, he was captured and condemned to death.

Jack seemed determined not to give him another chance.

All compassion was dead in the hearts of his captors.

So numerous had been his crimes, so atrocious had been his conduct, and so infamous his treachery, that he had placed himself without the pale of mercy.

He saw these stern, relentless men digging his grave.

Slowly but surely the dreadful work proceeded.

The hole grew deeper.

It was a little after the ebb, and the tide was flowing sluggishly in.

About an hour's time was required for the water to flow over the spot where his executioners were working.

How terrible must have been the wretched coward's thoughts at that moment.

How inexpressibly bitter.

"How deep?" asked Sam, who was down in the hole.

"What's his height?" asked Jack.

"Four foot nothing, I guess."

"Make it four feet."

"Right. Clear the track."

The work went on until the grave was dug.

By this time the tide was drawing perilously near.

One wave larger than the rest had rolled up to within a couple of yards of it.

Jack went up to the prisoner, and took him by the scruff of the neck as he would have done a rat.

Bigamini shivered.

The imminence of his danger made him find his tongue.

"Oh, sir—oh! Mr. Harkaway—kind, good gentleman—sir, have pity!" he gasped.

"What pity have you shown your victims?" replied Jack.

Bigamini was silent.

"Did you think of my friends or myself when you carried news of our movements to Barboni?"

"I was his spy, sir."

"Did you show the witch any mercy, or—but it is a waste of time to talk to you."

As he spoke he dropped the spy into the hole.

"Shovel away!" he said.

Clear-the-Track and Harvey instantly began to pour in the sand, which they trod down with their feet.

At length Bigamini was firmly imbedded.

They proceeded very much as a man does who is planting a tree.

Only the spy's head remained above the surface.

"All done," said Harvey.

"Fall back," said Jack.

The three men retreated, and as they had placed the condemned man's face towards the sea, they could only see the back of his head.

His plaintive wails and exclamations, however, were distinctly audible, mingled with the mournful splashing of the waves.

"Oh, sir—kind sir, spare me," he cried. "I ain't so bad as you think. I might have killed your child, but I didn't."

An approaching wave higher than others, rolled up to his chin, and splashed into his open mouth.

The salt water made him choke.

"Lord help me, I can't breathe!" he continued. "What right have you to kill me? You're no legal judges."

"We are doing a righteous deed in ridding the earth of a contemptible monster," said Jack.

Another and another wave broke over him.

There was water all around him now, and it was quickly circling in foaming wavelets up to his chin.

The man's last moments were spent in prayer.

He went mad, and cursed his enemies in language too terrible to be written.

Jack turned away in sickening horror

CHAPTER X.

BIGAMINI DEPARTS ON HIS VOYAGE.

HARKAWAY and his friends turned to go.

Though by no means prudish, their ears were offended by the fearful torrent of imprecations Bigamini poured out.

"I reckon I never heard a chap cuss like that but once, and that was out west in California," observed Sam, as they turned away.

"It must have been awful if it was worse than this," said Harvey.

"Yes. I was making tracks for an hotel in a wildish bit of the country, when I came upon a train of wagons drawn by mules.

"There was a softish bit of road close at hand, and I stood up to see how they would get through it.

"The first wagon got through all right, so did the second, but the third stuck fast.

"The driver shouted, swore, and cracked his whip, but it was no go. Those behind—there were a dozen teams altogether—began to get impatient; as well as they might, for it was getting nigh supper time, and they were still a mile from the hotel, where they calculated upon finding some of the tallest kind of feeding.

"At last a long slab of a coon from Vermont, who had charge of the hindmost team came up.

"He was a very mild-looking, fair complexioned fellow, and you'd have thought molasses candy couldn't be sweeter, as he gently said to the driver of the stranded team:

"My good friend, can I help you?"

"The other driver guessed he might if he could, so the Vermont man took hold of the halter of the near side leading mule, and said, just as gently as before:

"Kick up here, mules."

"And there was something in his manner very persuasive, for every mule strained at the traces except one obstinate beast that resolutely arched its spine and hung back.

"Kim up, mule," repeated the Vermont man, 'kim up, you ugly old'—

"Well, I can't repeat all he said, but for ten minutes that Vermont man poured out a perfect flood of the wildest blasphemy, till I almost feared the earth would open and swallow us up.

"But the obstinate beast gradually relaxed, till just as the Vermont man's oaths came to a climax,

all the beasts gave a strain, and the wagon rolled on out of the mire.

"I saw the Vermont fellow afterwards at the bar of the hotel, where I went to get a dust cutter."

"What is a dust cutter?" Jack asked.

"A nip of whisky straight, and a prime thing it is, too, to cut its way through the dust when your throat is filled. The Vermont man and the driver of the stranded team were liquoring up together, and the latter said, in a very admiring tone:

"Well, Ned, you can sw'ar, I bet."

"Me sw'ar?" replied he of Vermont, modestly; "why, stranger, I can't cuss as much as is worth a cent. But you oughter just hear old Zeke Jackson. He can exhort the impenitent animals. Why, stranger, I've knowed a mule renounce all the pomps and vanities of this world, and haul four tons through a foot of clay, when old Zeke was holding forth."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed our friends, but their laughter died away, as a most unearthly wail of agony from the lips of the unfortunate Bigamini reached their ears.

"It's rather a cold-blooded thing, after all, to leave him there to be drowned," said Harvey. "Don't you think so, Jack?"

Jack nodded and replied.

"I've just been thinking that we are rather exceeding the limits of just vengeance. Let us get him up before it is too late."

"Go ahead, then, boss!" exclaimed Clear-the-Track.

They rushed back at full speed.

Of a surety, the wretched spy was in a pitiful case, for each wave, as it touched the shore, rolled up over his head, and it was only at intervals that he could breathe and cough out the salt water that filled his nostrils and mouth.

The three friends dashed into the water and commenced removing the sand, Harkaway using a flat piece of wood—a broken oar-blade that had just been washed up.

But it was slow work, for every moment the water was getting deeper, and each wave in its advance, washed some sand back into the hole.

"Clear the track!" exclaimed the Yankee, shouting his war cry. "Here, fix this rope round the skunk's body just under his arms; then a good strong pull and out he comes."

In an instant the suggestion was acted upon, and with all the force of their muscular arms, the three friends pulled away at the body of the spy.

But the wet sand held him most tenaciously, and it was only just possible for them to extricate him.

However, they did at length—when his legs were almost dislocated—manage to drag him from his perilous position.

"Blame the confounded skunk!" ejaculated Clear-the-Track. "I fancy he's drowned, after all."

"No," said Harvey, "see, he moves."

"He's bound to die a drier death," said Jack.

"Of which this rope we've hauled him out with is an emblem," was the remark of Clear-the-Track Sam.

One or two slight movements of the face and limbs convinced Jack Harkaway and his friends that the wretched spy was still alive.

So they poured a little drop of whisky down his throat, a proceeding which soon effected a complete cure.

"Oh, once I was a happy Smiffins, but now I am a very miserable, half-drowned Bigamini," muttered the poor wretch.

"What are we going to do with him now?" asked Harvey.

"I hardly know," replied Jack. "It won't do to leave him about this neighborhood. If we do, he is sure to take to murder and robbery again."

"Take him to Naples," suggested Clear-the-Track.

"No good; yet I don't know that it would not be the best plan."

Now Bigamini had been listening to his tormentors, being very anxious indeed to know what they intended doing with him.

He felt convinced by this time that his life was to be spared, though, far from feeling grateful, he

resolved in his own mind never to miss an opportunity of doing an injury to the three friends.

But going back to Naples, where, perhaps, some ugly disclosures might be made respecting past transactions, did not suit him at all.

He therefore opened his eyes, and began moaning:

"Oh, noble gentleman, for Heaven's sake, have pity on one who was once a happy"—

"Shut up! I don't want that kind of gammon," Jack said, very sharply.

"If you are not quiet, we'll bury you again, head downwards," said Clear-the-Track.

"Oh, gentleman, listen to the prayer of a miserable Bigamini. Don't take me to Naples. Do what you like with me except that. Send me to sea in an open boat, without oars, sail, or provisions, if you like, but don't take me to Naples.

Jack gave him a gentle touch with his toe, not far from the spot where the American's bullet had penetrated, and bade him rise, an order which the wretched spy was constrained to obey.

Bigamini was drenched to the skin with salt water, and the damp sand clung to his clothing.

Ever and anon, he rubbed the wounded part, which the salt water caused to smart terribly, though it had stopped the bleeding.

"Now walk on in front of us," said Jack.

"And remember," added Clear-the-Track Sam, "if you attempt to escape, I swear by the ghost of General Jackson, I'll let daylight through the other end of you."

By way of convincing Bigamini that he was in earnest, the young American reloaded his rifle.

They kept along the beach, going towards Naples.

Had it not been for Clear-the-Track's threat, Bigamini would have bolted, but he had a wholesome fear of the rifle, and knew that an attempt to escape would be followed by swift punishment.

When they had gone something like a couple of miles, they came in sight of a little fishing village, where some eight or ten boats were drawn upon the beach.

Telling Harvey and Sam to guard their prisoner carefully, Jack Harkaway strode forward and entered into a bargain with the fisherman.

One boat he purchased outright, paying for it in gold, with a liberality that fairly astonished the vender.

Another small craft he hired.

"Shall I assist you to row, signor?" asked the man.

"No," replied the former "stroke" of the Oxford eight; "launch the boats, fasten the bow of the small one to the stern of the larger, and then I shall need no assistance."

The man did as desired, smiling at the difficulties he expected the English signor would encounter when he got into the boat.

But when Jack took up the oars and commenced rowing, his smile changed into a prolonged stare of astonishment.

"Per Baccho! These English signori are devils," he exclaimed.

Jack soon ran his two boats aground just where Sam and Harvey were waiting with their prisoner.

"In with you," exclaimed our hero. "You Bigamini, in the small boat, Harvey and Sam with me."

Bigamini hesitated, but Clear-the-Track's rifle soon compelled obedience.

"What are you a going to do with me, Mr. Harkaway?" he asked.

"You said you would rather be sent to sea in an open boat without oars or sail, so you shall have that treat. Come, Dick, take an oar, and we'll give this beggar a ride free gratis for nothing, as poor Sidney Dawson's scout used to say."

"For Heaven's sake," he began, but the American, who sat in the stern of the larger boat jerked that Bigamini occupied up and down in such a manner that the spy was compelled to devote all his attention to the preservation of his balance, and therefore held his tongue.

Jack and Harvey pulled away as though they had been pulling for a wager.

Objects on shore grew smaller and smaller as they receded from it.

Presently a breeze came off the land, then Jack

dropped his oar and hoisted a small mast and sail, which formed part of the equipment of the boat.

Then merrily away before the wind, till the coast line became hazy, and finally vanished entirely.

They were beyond sight of land.

Jack then lowered his sail, and resuming his oars pulled round and around in a circle for some little time, to "puzzle the beggar," as he said.

When Jack had finished, he untied the rope which had held Bigamini's boat to his own, and allowed the spy to drift away.

"Mr. Harkaway," shrieked the wretch, "this 'ere is murder! Give us a chance for life; leave us one of them oars to guide the boat with."

Jack and his friends held a short consultation, the result of which was that Bigamini was permitted to keep both oars; and Clear-the-Track, at the last moment, threw to him a leather covered flask, half full of whisky.

Then they hoisted sail and bore away, leaving Bigamini afloat on the Mediterranean.

"We have been in a worse fix than his, eh, Dick?" said Jack, looking back at the spy, who was a very bad oarsman.

"We have," replied Harvey; "and we had done nothing very bad to deserve such luck."

"There are many chances in his favor. He is almost certain to be picked up by some passing vessel."

In an hour they had sighted land again.

Bigamini and his little boat could no longer be seen.

Jack steered direct for Naples, guiding himself by a small compass attached to his watch chain.

It was late in the evening, and the wind was blowing half a gale, when they landed.

A poor look-out for Bigamini, they all agreed, yet they felt happier at the thought that they had at all events given him a chance of saving his own life.

It would have been unlike Jack's manly character to have allowed him to drown in that hole in the sands.

But what of Bigamini himself?

He knew little of rowing, and a current was running fast, so that in spite of his endeavors to follow our hero, he was unable to do so.

Presently he was all alone.

Then he began to curse, but that did no good, so he applied to the whisky flask; and under the influence of a draught, hope once more began to whisper in his ear.

A ship might pass and pick him up.

But when the night was darkest, Bigamini's guilty conscience began to people the surrounding space with spirits of his many victims.

There was the old witch, his own wife, and many others whose days were shortened by his agency; and they seemed to howl in his ear that the time of vengeance was at hand.

The fearful visions he conjured up would not be laid by repeated applications to the whisky flask, so the wretched little tailor laid down in the bottom of the boat, and cursed his ill fate till daylight chased away the phantoms with which darkness had surrounded him.

And so the next night was passed by him, as also the third and the fourth. Bigamini had long since given up rowing, so that the fourth day found him drifting with the wind and current.

Certainly the fates had not treated him kindly, but then he deserved no kindness, for his hand had been against every man.

Five days and nights did he toss about in his boat, in a state almost verging on madness, sometimes blaspheming, at others whistling and singing.

And the idea of death, which at first had been very terrible, now seemed more familiar—nay, he even went so far as to contemplate it as a means of putting an end to the miseries he endured.

"Hang it, who is afraid?" he exclaimed. "Every man must die. A man can die but once, and when it is over there is an end."

Bigamini tried to look extremely brave and resolute as he uttered these words, but when he remembered that there was no one at hand to be surprised at his bravery, he relaxed a little.

"I wonder if that would be the end. I don't know much about it, but when I was a happy Smiffins I used to hear about another state, about

rewards and punishments. Now, if that's true, the old one below will have me, that's certain."

He paused a moment, but suddenly mustering up resolution, he shrieked:

"Curse me! I'll think about it no longer. I am not afraid of death, so here goes."

With which words Bigamini struggled to his feet, and after one last despairing look around threw himself head foremost into the blue sea.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EXECUTION OF THE BRIGAND CHIEF.

WHEN the three friends reached the Strada Di Toledo, they were surprised to see Monday performing extraordinary antics on the door-step.

"Hallo!" said Sam. "Look at the Kinki's head cutting up Jim Crow capers. Look at him. He's gone clean off his cocoanut."

"What's the row, Monday?" asked Jack.

"Um caught the brigand, sare," replied Monday.

"Who has?"

"Mast' Walter. Him just come back with um."

"Are you really in earnest?" said Jack, whose eyes burned lustroously.

"Me see um, sare, lodged in um jail. All Naples got um flags out. The general him been here."

"This is great news," said Jack.

"Immense," remarked Harvey.

"Guess the little coxswain's a big chap," observed Clear-the-Track.

"Our task is nearly ended," said Jack, who ran up stairs to his wife.

Emily no sooner saw him than she threw herself into his arms, sobbing with joy.

"Have you heard the news, dearest?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!"

"It's all over now," continued Jack.

"Thank God, Jack, thank God!" said Emily.

Placing her on a sofa, he entered the next room, where he found Mr. Mole and Walter Campbell engaged in a hot discussion.

"I tell you straight," said Walter, "that I captured the brigand."

"And I tell you, sir," replied Mr. Mole, "that I found him first."

"Why didn't you collar him, then?"

"Because I had too much generosity to hand a poor, broken-down blind man over to the police."

"And I hadn't, you see. That is just the difference."

"It's my find," said Mole, doggedly.

"And it's my capture," replied Walter, with equal doggedness.

"My dear fellows," said Jack, "I congratulate you both. Why grumble over the matter? You have got the scoundrel, and that ought to be enough for you."

"But it isn't," said Walter. "Mole says he did it all, and he didn't."

"I found him," replied Mr. Mole, "and I let him alone, out of pity."

"More fool you," said Walter.

"Mr. Campbell," replied Mr. Mole, "I will not put up with such language from you or anyone."

"Then do the other thing."

"What's that, may I ask?"

"Lump it."

"Just what I might expect from a Cambridge man," said Mole, with a sneer.

"Don't you run Cambridge down."

"Look here," said Jack. "I won't have it. This is not the time for a row. Stash it, young one. I have something to tell you."

"He's so jolly aggravating, the old humbug," said Walter.

"You have captured the brigand"—

"No, I did it," said Mole.

"Well, you did it between you, sir. Will that do? And if you've done one big thing, we've done another."

"What's that?"

"We've been lucky enough to settle Bigamini."

"The bigger thief of the two," said Walter.

"The last snake in the nest," said Mr. Mole.

"We'll have a champagne cup, as well iced as Monday can do it," said Jack, "and sink all our differences in the flowing bowl."

"Hurrah!" cried Walter. "I am sorry, though, there are no more brigands to kill."

"We will drown our differences, Harkaway, in the flowing bowl," cried Mr. Mole.

"That's right," replied Jack.

"This is a great day, a very great day, and I shall always observe it as such," cried Mole.

"We've licked, after all, and if it wasn't for Carden's loss"—said Walter.

"Hush!" whispered Jack, "we musn't conjure up ghosts. I regret poor Tom as much as anyone. But I mean to be jolly to-night all the same."

"Shall we give a cheer?" asked Walter.

"Yes," replied Jack.

"A regular rouser?"

"Yes."

"One that will be heard in the street?"

"Yes. Here come Dick and Sam; let them have it. We'll illuminate the house to-night."

"Take the tip from me, then. Join us, you fellows," said the little coxswain, who was much excited. "Ready?"

There was a general response in the affirmative.

"Hip, hip, hip! hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"For we are jolly good fellows—
For we are jolly good fellows—
For we are jolly good fellows—

And so say all of us.

"Hip, hip, hip! hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"It's a way we have in the army,
It's a way we have in the navy,
It's a way we have at the 'varsity,

To drink a fellow's health.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

The lazy Neapolitans who were passing by stopped in the street to listen, wondering what the noise meant.

The evening passed very pleasantly.

General Cialdini would have had Barboni tried by a court-martial, but as he was not captured by the military, it was decided that he must appear before the ordinary criminal court.

The indictment against him was a very long one.

Barboni did not employ counsel.

He refused all efforts of assistance.

At length the day of the trial came on, and the court was crowded.

The counsel for the crown had a very large brief, and seemed anxious to make a long speech.

Led in by the jailers, Barboni took his place in the dock.

His steps were faltering, but when he knew where he had to stand, he drew himself up, and remained perfectly erect.

The indictment was read out.

Then the usher of the court ordered silence, and the great brigand was asked if he pleaded guilty or not guilty.

"My lord president of this court," said Barboni, "I have fallen upon evil times, and knowing that my fate is already decided, I plead guilty to the charges brought against me."

The judge proceeded to pass sentence upon him.

This was that he should be hanged by the neck in the public plaza until he was dead.

The jailers then led him away.

One week was allowed to elapse between the sentence and the execution.

The day before the one appointed for the execution, Barboni sent for Harkaway.

Jack went to the prison.

He was conducted into the condemned cell, where he found Barboni awaiting him.

To Jack's astonishment he advanced towards him, and held out his hand.

Jack drew back.

"I thought you were blind," he said.

"I was; but I have engaged the best surgical skill since I have been here, and my sight is partially restored to me," replied Barboni.

"Why have you sent for me?"

"Because I wish you to complete the work you have begun."

"In what way?"

"It is my intention to do justice to Lady Darrel and her son. Here is my written confession. Take it, and you will find that they will have little difficulty in regaining their own."

Jack took the document.

"I am glad that you have made reparation," he said.

"Why have I done it?" said Barboni; "why? because I loved the woman. You do not suppose, Mr. Harkaway, that the fear of death affects me." He laughed scornfully.

"I have faced it too often to think that it has any terrors. No, no, I have a tinge of English blood in my veins, and the English are not generally afraid of death."

"Have you English blood in you?" asked Jack.

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"My father was an Englishman," replied Barboni, proudly.

"Have you anything else to say to me?" queried Jack.

"Won't you shake hands with the brigand, Mr. Harkaway?"

"Thank you for the honor, but"—

"You'd rather not, eh?" said Barboni, with a smile, seeing he hesitated.

"Exactly."

"Yet you did not mind being friendly with the Prince Di Villanova, and I and the prince are one and the same person."

"I was not to know that," said Jack.

"Well, I'm sorry I made the offer. If you have your pride, I have mine," said Barboni.

Jack made no reply.

"You seem to forget that I was a generous enemy," continued Barboni.

"In what way?"

"I spared the life of your friend, Mr. Carden, when I had him in my power."

"Well?"

"And when you were my prisoner I did not order you to be stabbed or shot."

"That's true," said Jack; "but there is no knowing what you might have done if my faithful Monday had not rescued me."

"Go, Mr. Harkaway," said Barboni. "I have found you a brave enemy, and the luck is on your side now."

"You only meet with the fate you might have expected," said Jack, "and I tell you I have no sympathy for you."

"I do not want it."

The brigand waved his hand loftily, and Jack retired with his confession in his pocket.

It was singular that the sight of this remarkable criminal should have been restored by surgical skill on the eve of his execution.

It would only enable him to see the surging crowd.

To behold the ghastly scaffold and the hideous gibbet from which he was to swing from this world into all eternity.

When the morning of the fatal day came, the friends prepared to go and witness the execution.

All Naples was *en fete*.

An execution was always a holiday with the Neapolitans.

And the death of such a distinguished man as Barboni had made himself, was certainly an opportunity for sight-seeing such as the most idle and listless of the lazaroni could not resist.

Jack and his friends took a window overlooking the square where the scaffold was erected.

They were rather grave than otherwise, for death is a sombre thing to contemplate when it comes with all the funeral trappings of the criminal law.

At ten o'clock the plaza was densely thronged.

A vast number of citizens had taken up favorable positions over night.

Troops were posted in every position of vantage. It was determined this time by the authorities to guard against a surprise.

No one, however daring, could hope to rescue Barboni.

At a quarter past ten he came into the square.

A priest walked by his side, and holding up a cross, he exhorted him to listen to the ministrations of religion.

But the brigand shook his head.

He turned a deaf ear to him.

As he lived, he died—an infidel.

He mounted the scaffold with a firm step, and did not shrink when the rope was placed round his neck.

Turning to the populace, he attempted to make a speech.

"Good people," he said, "I am the victim of English hate and persecution, but I die hurling defiance against heaven and earth."

A thrill of horror ran through the spectators.

The executioner obeyed a sign from the priest.

He dropped the bolt.

Barboni fell into the gulf, just as the impious words left his lips.

He hung suspended before the gaping crowd.

His limbs twitched convulsively for more than a minute.

Then he ceased to exist.

Such was the end of Barboni, the brigand chief, who was publicly hanged, as a punishment for his misdeeds, in the sight of the major part of the population of Naples.

Jack only wished to satisfy himself that the miscreant was dead.

It had occurred to him that Hunston and Toro might try to effect a rescue, though he did not think such a thing at all likely.

Quitting the sickening spectacle, they all returned home.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A CASTAWAY.

OUR readers perhaps imagine that we have entirely finished the career of Bigamini with his desperate attempt at suicide as recorded in the previous chapter.

Never was a greater mistake.

Within two minutes after his plunge, Bigamini was in his boat again, and that, too, without the aid of any special intervention of Providence.

It came to pass in this manner.

While descending through the water, Bigamini not only saw, but actually touched, a large fish of the kind known to the Mediterranean fishers as the tunny.

The fish was horribly scared, and swam away, while Bigamini, being under the impression that it was a shark, struck vigorously upwards, regained the surface of the water, and scrambled towards his boat, which was only a couple of feet off.

"Not for me!" he exclaimed, as he climbed over the gunwale. "I don't want that chap's jaws a-smashing and crashing through my bones. If it was only peaceful drowning, I wouldn't mind; but fond as I am of fishing, I don't care to be the bait."

So he laid himself down to dry in the sun in a condition not to be envied by any human being, shivering with cold, hungry and thirsty, but with all his suicide notions taken completely out of him.

But he still raved as much as ever.

At length, at about midnight, when it was extremely dark, and when cold and hunger had almost overcome him, he beheld a light at a distance.

"It is a star," was Bigamini's first thought, but a few seconds' reflection convinced him the atmosphere was too thick to allow any starlight to penetrate.

It must be a ship's light.

He looked, he shouted with all the force of his lungs, but still the light did not move, or if it did, it approached by such imperceptible degrees that it gave him little or no hope.

At last it died away.

Bigamini then gave way to despair again.

But as day broke, hope once more gained the ascendant, for, to his inexpressible delight, he beheld a sail at a very little distance.

Bigamini did everything he could to attract attention, and soon had the satisfaction of perceiving that he had been noticed.

The sea was calm.

The course of the vessel brought her within five hundred yards of the castaway.

A boat was lowered, and in a very short time Bigamini was on the deck of the good ship "Cato," bound from the Black Sea to Brazil.

As soon as some refreshment had revived the wretched Bigamini a little, the captain of the

"Cato," a stalwart Englishman, named Hughes, very naturally wished to know what had happened that he chanced to be floating about alone.

Now Bigamini, in his intense joy at being once more saved, had not thought of that.

Of course he had not the remotest intention of speaking the truth.

The only thing was to hatch a yarn which should bear some resemblance of probability without going too much into detail. So, after a good deal of stammering and hesitating, he commenced:

"I shipped on board the 'Black Boy.'"

"What as?" demanded the captain and mate in a breath.

"As—as a sailor, sir."

"They must have been precious short of hands to ship such a lubber as you," said Captain Hughes, contemptuously. "Go on. Where did you ship?"

"At Palermo, in Sicily, sir. We were wrecked in that gale five days ago, and all hands, except myself, were drowned. I managed to save myself by getting into that boat."

"And why did not the others get into the boat?"

"I really don't know, sir. I was very much confused, and don't exactly remember what happened, but I suppose they forgot it."

Captain Hughes stared, but the mate, who had been looking over the side, exclaimed:

"Why, sir, that boat never belonged to the 'Black Boy.' It is one of the Italian fisher boats."

"It strikes me that this fellow is about the biggest liar that ever spoke the English language, if he is not something worse. Now, then, you had better tell me the truth."

"I have, sir, on my word of honor."

"Your word isn't worth a tinker's curse. Who was the captain of the 'Black Boy?'"

"Captain Campbell," answered Bigamini, prompted thereto by a passing recollection of the little coxswain.

"Another lie. Why, seven days ago, when we spoke the 'Black Boy,' there was no such man on board. Now I'll just give you one more chance to tell the truth, you dirty little vagabond; and if you don't, why, look out for squalls."

Bigamini remained silent.

"Speak, you scoundrel," said Captain Hughes, catching hold of one end of a coil of rope.

In spite of the threatening gesture of the captain, Bigamini saw that an attempt to explain would only involve fresh contradictions and exposure.

So he very rapidly and philosophically made up his mind that it would be better to endure a rope's ending for silence than to risk the chance of greater ills, which would very likely follow if he told the truth.

"Speak, you rascal—once!" exclaimed Captain Hughes.

Bigamini shook his head to intimate that he had no intention of doing so.

"Speak—twice!"

Captain Hughes flourished the rope's end over his head, but the little tailor resolutely held his tongue.

"For the third and last time—speak!" shouted the exasperated captain.

Not a word.

Down came the rope with full force, and Bigamini gave vent to a terrible yell.

Again, again and again the cruel cord descended on the shoulders of the howling little spy, but still he obstinately maintained silence as to the past, though loudly imploring for mercy in the present.

"You villian!" said Captain Hughes. "It seems you are obstinate; well, I'll take care and hand you over to the authorities when I reach the end of the voyage. I warrant they will find some method of making you speak. Go forward; and, Mr. Wild, see the rascal works for his rations."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the mate. "Now then, what's your name, forward you go."

"Where's that, please, sir?"

"A pretty sailor you are to ship on board the 'Black Boy!'" exclaimed the captain, in a towering rage; "why, there's forward."

So saying, he took hold of Bigamini's collar with

one hand, and his trousers with the other, and threw him with great force towards the foremast.

Poor Bigamini fell on one of the ring-bolts, and cut his ankle severely.

He lay howling on the deck for half an hour; the crew, who had heard his bald, disjointed tale, being of the same opinion as the captain—namely, that he was an impostor, if not something worse.

So they took little or no notice of him till a shift of the wind necessitated an alteration of the sails, when, cursing him for a useless, hulking lubber, one of them scull-dragged him into the fore-castle.

CHAPTER XII.

MOTHER CARY'S CHICKENS.

FOR three days Bigamini remained in one corner of the fore-castle, subsisting on the scraps of biscuit and beef that were occasionally thrown him, accompanied by a curse.

Be it understood that neither Captain Hughes nor his men were naturally cruel, and if Bigamini had been able to tell "a plain unvarnished tale" when they first found him, he would have fared much better.

But the sailors knew him to be a liar, and his own tale had caused him to be suspected of scuttling the vessel he said he had embarked in.

"That fellow will bring bad luck to the 'Cato,'" said a bushy-whiskered tar to his messmate.

So great was the dislike to Bigamini that it required all Captain Hughes' authority to keep the crew from turning him into his boat again and setting him adrift, a project which found great favor among the tars, and was only prevented by a promise that the obnoxious one should be handed over to the legal authorities on reaching Brazil.

For the three days Bigamini remained in the fore-castle, he was only able to crawl on his hands and knees, the cut on his ankle being very painful, and so offensive from neglect and filth that the sailors strongly objected to his remaining.

The cook—more by the way of a joke than anything, advised Bigamini to wash it with some strong brine from the bottom of one of the beef casks.

He commenced to do so.

"Oh, crikey, oh!" he shouted, as the strong salt found its way into the festering wound; and to the intense delight of the sailors, he hopped about like a bear on hot bricks.

After a little time, however, one of them, who happened to be tender-hearted in comparison with the others, gave the poor wretch a bit of tallow and some rag to dress the wound with.

And in a couple of days Bigamini was so far cured as to be able to hobble about the deck; but in himself he bitterly swore vengeance against his persecutors.

Nothing could possibly make a sailor of the brigand's spy, so Bigamini was handed over to the cook and steward to be a kind of cabin-boy (full grown) and general drudge, to the great delight of the stripling who had formerly performed those duties, but who now went forward to do the work of an ordinary seaman.

The "Cato" did not as a rule carry passengers, but at the time Bigamini was picked up there were five on board, two ladies and three gentlemen.

Of four of the passengers nothing particular need be said, but the fifth, a Mr. Corrie, was noted for his enthusiastic pursuit of all kinds of specimens for his cabinet of natural history.

All was fish that came to his net, and the most insignificant of marine animals was pretty sure to be acceptable to him.

They had been five days at sea without any more important event than the finding of Bigamini, and were now in calm tropical seas, when Mr. Corrie, for the first time in his life, saw a flock of Mother Carey's chickens, and immediately wished the captain to shoot one.

Captain Hughes, without being superstitious himself, knew the crew would object, so he refused, and Mr. Corrie grumbled.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Bigamini, touching his hat.

"Why, I want one of those birds, and Captain Hughes will not shoot it."

"Never mind, sir; if you can get hold of a gun,

I'll drop the birds. Don't say anything, sir, but bring up a gun next time you come on deck."

Mr. Corrie agreed to do so, and the consequence was, that an hour afterwards Captain Hughes was startled by the report of a gun, and rushing on deck, followed by the mate and some of the crew, at once saw what had happened.

Captain Hughes himself was superior to superstitious fears, but he was angry to think that a thing so strongly objected to had been done.

With one blow of his fist he stretched Bigamini on the deck, and then retired below, muttering anything but good wishes about naturalists and such-like scientific enthusiasts.

"That's very strange," said Mr. Corrie, looking down on the prostrate Bigamini.

Then turning to the mate, he added:

"Will you have the kindness, sir, to let down the boat to pick up the birds?"

"On one condition," replied the mate.

"What condition is that, sir?"

"That you go off in the boat and never more set foot in this ship."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the naturalist, "all this fuss about a few trumpery birds."

"Those birds, sir, have a good deal to do with sailors. This is a very serious business, Mr. Corrie, and I can assure you we have not seen the last of it."

The mate then went forward to converse with the crew, and Mr. Corrie thought it best to go below.

As for Bigamini, he gathered himself up and slunk into the caboose, muttering deep vengeance.

"I've been struck, and hit, and served out with brine, and I'm blest if I don't make some of them suffer."

He coiled himself up in a corner, and began to brood over his plans.

"They're all against me," muttered Bigamini, rubbing his eyes, which began to show the discoloring effects of the captain's fist; "but I'm blest if they don't get it hot before long."

All that day he sulked about, pondering how he could achieve his proposed vengeance.

But no opportunity seemed to present itself.

Next morning he heard, soon after breakfast, a slight commotion among the sailors on deck.

Being always inquisitive, Bigamini rushed up to see what was the matter.

He found the sailors congregated about the after part of the deck, watching some motions of the monsters of the deep, who were leaping about in pursuit of a number of flying fish.

"Dolphins," said one of them, condescending to explain to the lubber, as they all styled Bigamini.

"Are they good to eat?" he asked.

"I believe you."

And in proof of that, he pointed to the preparations the men were making to capture one or more of the fish.

But at that moment, the steward shouted for the ex-spy, who was obliged to go forward and prepare the coffee for the men's breakfast.

That done, Bigamini had to work hard to get things ready for the passengers, so he was unable to see the sport of catching the dolphin, though, as he soon heard, he would have to cook it for dinner.

"Now then, down below with you, and sort out those stores," said the steward, quickening the movements of his drudge with his foot.

"All right," growled Bigamini, as he slouched away.

"I wish the stores would poison 'em," he said, as he commenced his task.

It was a dirty, disagreeable job, in a close, confined atmosphere, and did not suit Bigamini very much.

However, he had to do it, so in no very agreeable frame of mind, he set to work.

"What's this?" he exclaimed to himself, when he presently came across a packet weighing two or three pounds.

He stripped off the outer covering, and a fiendish smile played upon his features as he read two words printed on a label upon the inner paper.

"This will do," he grinned; and he soon finished his task.

Reporting this to the steward, Bigamini was on

dered, as he expected, to go and assist the cook in preparing dinner for passengers and crew.

The cook being drunk—the dolphin-catching had excited him early in the morning—Bigamini was obliged to do nearly all the cooking himself.

Strange to say, he did not grumble, as was his usual custom, when burdened with about half as much labor as fell to every other man on board the ship.

He whistled and laughed to such an extent that many of the men repented, and felt sorry they had ever struck and abused the spy.

Dinner time came.

The weather was warm, and the sea so calm that the ship made scarcely any way.

The jolly sailors had little to do.

Laughing and skylarking occupied the greater part of the morning.

But at noon they all sat down to a substantial dinner.

The dolphin had not been cooked, for Bigamini pleaded ignorance of the manner in which the fish should be dressed.

But there was a very substantial "plum duff," of which all partook.

All—captain, crew and passengers.

Except Bigamini, who slyly threw his portion overboard.

Dinner being over, the captain called for one of the crew who was a tolerably proficient fiddler, and proposed a dance.

But ere this could be done the mate came in with a very scared look upon him.

"What's the matter?" demanded Captain Hughes.

"The helmsman has dropped down dead, sir, and three other men, including Jones, the fiddler, are as ill as they can be."

On hearing this, the captain turned as pale as his mate, and rushed on deck.

The passengers hardly knew what to make of this.

Our friend, the enthusiastic naturalist, attempted to joke about it, and followed the captain, who, however, was in no humor for joking.

Neither captain nor naturalist returned any more to the cabin, for in a few minutes both were seized with the same illness that had already so rapidly removed no less than four of the crew.

"We are poisoned!" exclaimed the mate.

"Poisoned!"

The terrible word flew through the ship.

"Where is the cook?" was the next question.

The cook was brought forward.

He was in a state of maudlin drunkenness, but otherwise exhibited no symptoms of anything like illness.

"What have you done with us?" demanded the mate, in hollow tones.

"Done?—nothing," stammered the man.

"We are poisoned."

"Then it must have been that vagabond the captain picked up."

"Search for him," said the mate.

A search being instituted, Bigamini was discovered in the fore-castle, apparently in the last agonies of death.

"It couldn't have been that fellow; he wouldn't poison himself. It must be you, for you alone are unhurt by the fatal stuff. I feel it."

"It is a mistake," protested the cook; "why should I poison you?"

But the mate and his men, who were fast succumbing to the effects of the poison, were not capable of reasoning very coherently.

"Overboard with the murderer! He shall not triumph," said the officer.

Half a dozen willing hands seized the unfortunate cook and hurled him over the side—a meal for the sharks, who now sported about the vessel.

The prognostications of the sailors had been fulfilled, though we still take the liberty of doubting whether the two birds had anything to do with it.

* * * * *

Let us close this painful scene as quickly as we can.

Two hours after that deathly dinner, all was silent on the ill-fated ship.

Silence, deep as the grave, till the villain, Bigamini, rose from the corner where he had been pretending to die, and gloated like a fiend over the

work he had done, for he it was who had poisoned the whole ship's company with the packet of arsenic he had found among the stores.

He laughed like a fiend as he ransacked the vessel and transferred all the coin he could find to his own pocket.

But in the midst of his exultation a pain shot through him, and he had to cease from his work to sit down among the pale corpses which strewed the deck.

Half an hour afterwards he was in a raging fever and delirious.

And he was the only living being on board that fated vessel, which drifted away on the ocean, with no hand to guide the helm.

Faugh! Let us leave the wretch to his fate.

* * * * *

When Jack reached the Strada Di Toledo, after the execution, he kissed Emily, and said:

"We sail for England to-morrow, darling."

"To-morrow?" she said, joyfully.

"Yes, I shall take passage presently in the first steamer of the *Messageries Imperiales* line.

"Who goes with us?"

"Harvey and Hilda, Mr. Mole, as the youngster's tutor, and Monday."

"What of our American friend?"

"Oh, he goes on to Rome. He has not yet done what he calls his European tour," said Jack.

"And Mr. Campbell?"

"He marries Lily Cockles to-morrow, before we start, and they are going to Switzerland."

"So we separate after all the exciting events we have gone through," said Emily.

"Certainly," replied Jack; "and now we'll have a bottle of wine. I've licked the brigand, and I'm as jolly as a sand-boy."

* * * * *

All was over.

The Englishmen had kept their oath, and hunted down Barboni and his formidable band.

[THE END.]

Jules Mortier, the Jacobin.

CHAPTER I.

STORMING THE CHATEAU.

It was the height of the Great Revolution—that revolution which, alas! we now call "The First French Revolution"—so many fresh craters have burst up from the yawning abyss of that mighty volcano.

It was a fair summer night—such a night as succeeds the sunny days of fair Thoulouse.

The stars burning in the deep blue skies like globules of fire.

The moon sailing in their midst, her white silvery lustre contrasting with their fiery scintillations, and flooding the deep rolling waves of the Garonne, the spires and turrets of Thoulouse, and the deep woods in its vicinity, with a clear transparent light.

The zephyrs of the south fan the acacias in the gardens of the Chateau de Villebonne, the orange blossoms and jasmine, and pass on, laden with sweet odors, to whisper softly among the massive boughs of the oak and beech in the adjacent forest, the thick foliage of which they have not power to stir.

The soft mellow voices of loving youth and maiden—the calm voices of devotion—should alone mingle with the thrilling song of the nightingale, on that delicious summer eve of the fair region of the South of France.

But far other sounds rang out on the borders of the deep woods and the banks of Garonne's vine-bordered waters.

Fierce howls and execrations, the rattle of musketry, and the clash of swords.

Along the beautiful banks of the famous Garonne swept a rabble rout.

Banditti gathered from all parts of France—dissolute idle mechanics from the great towns, thieves, housebreakers, dishonest servants—wretches who at the outset of the Revolution had

been drawn to Paris by the money of the atrocious Philip Egalite, Duke of Orleans, who voted in the Assembly for the execution of his cousin, Louis the Sixteenth, and himself most justly perished on the scaffold only a few months later.

It was these wretches who swelled the ranks of the crazed enthusiasts whom infidel and democratic writers had inspired with the belief that the extirpation of all social order, the trampling on every principle of humanity—the reign of anarchy, of plunder, and bloodshed—was the road to true liberty, plenty, and peace.

From Paris the agents of the revolution spread over the land.

Nowhere did the storm rage more fiercely than in the sunny regions of the South.

"Ca ira," and the "Marseillaise"—that terrible hymn sung by Barberoux and his followers as they marched into Paris—attest to this hour the fury of the revolution in the South of France.

The people had suffered—no doubt of that.

The luxury and insolence of the nobles had been unbearable.

Few among the aristocrats were more hated either in the capital or on their own estates than the Counts de Villebonne.

Gay, witty, luxurious, and cynical, they were supreme favorites in their own class, and supremely abhorred by the people.

They were not among the number of nobles who fled.

They were a valorous and determined race.

They disdained, they said, to flee before the canaille.

Had more of their class been alike resolute, it is possible history would have another tale to tell even of the First French Revolution.

Had the nobility and gentry made the stand which the English Cavaliers did, the ruffian mob would never have risen to such supremacy.

They had lorded it grandly—the Counts de Villebonne.

Their hotel was one of the most magnificent in Paris, their chateau near Thoulouse famous for its gorgeous halls, its furniture and decorations, its park, its gardens, with their grottos and terraces and fountains, its lawns and pastures.

The count of the period was a young man, with a beautiful wife and two fair children.

He had two brothers and a lovely young sister betrothed to a gallant officer in the king's guards.

The Villebonnes not only disdained to flee—they were madly desirous of revenge.

Robespierre himself never lopped off the heads of presumed aristocrats more ferociously than they would have lopped off the heads of the democrats.

They ensconced themselves in the chateau, and, despite the entreaties of their faithful servants, they refused to seek safety in flight even when the news was brought that a body of Jacobins who had been ravaging all the houses of the gentry in the neighborhood of Thoulouse had determined on attacking Villebonne.

Eugene St. Aubin, the young officer betrothed to Adele de Villebonne, was in La Vendee, with the gallant George Cadoudal.

At the chateau on that eventful night were the count and countess, with their little son, the count's younger brother, Philippe de Villebonne, and Adele.

About a score of male servants, including their gamekeepers and huntsmen, composed the whole force which the Villebonnes had to defend the chateau from a rabble force not numbering less than a thousand.

Determined against them quite as ferociously as could have been the most furious of the Jacobins in Paris were many of their own vassals—men whom they had ground into the dust, whose wives and daughters they had seduced, and whose children had perished of fever and want.

Nor was the worst element of a murderous mob wanting, in the unsexed wretches who bore the outward form of women, with the hearts of tigresses and she-wolves.

On they swept, armed some of them with swords, muskets, and pikes, but many of them with weapons horribly diverted from their accustomed use.

Axes, reaping-hooks, scythes, spades, and even pruning-knives, were converted into instruments of slaughter.

How the pure light of the moon was polluted by the hideous faces on which it shone!

Men and women alike, with visages brutal and ferocious, reeking with perspiration, stained with dust and blood—many of them with their clothes tattered.

The hideous red cap upon their heads, the weapons they grasped already clotted with gore, for they had fleshed them on men, women, and children in their route from Thoulouse.

Foremost among the throng was a Mephistophelean-looking villain, accounted as a soldier of the Republic and the red flag.

This fellow had originally been head clerk to a Parisian banker employed by the Count de Villebonne.

He had forged a check to a large amount with the count's signature, had been tried for the forgery, and sent to the galleys.

At the outset of the Revolution he had escaped, and, of course, enlisted himself in the ranks of those who perpetrated its worst atrocities.

Throughout all he had kept his eye on the Count de Villebonne, who had shown him no mercy during the prosecution.

More than once he might have accomplished the revenge he had vowed upon the count personally, but that was a half measure not sufficient for his malice.

Reared in a decent class of life, Achille Noir was not altogether ignorant of history.

He had read of the Jacquerie of old—how they misused the wives and daughters of the nobles and gentlemen before their faces, and then roasted the men alive.

Some such vengeance did Achille promise himself.

The kiss of Mother Guillotine was too short and sweet—worse than that must befall the Count de Villebonne.

Side by side with Achille Noir, with great strides like his own, marched—one of the soft sex shall we call her?—that tall, strapping, big-boned Amazon.

Nothing soft or feminine about her most certainly. And yet the virago, shouting, yelling, and flourishing an iron bar torn from the park railings, was undeniably handsome.

She might have served for a picture of Bellona.

Her rich hair streaming wide from under the cap of scarlet cloth, that contrasted with its ebon blackness; the strong but well-shaped aquiline nose, flashing dark eyes, and scarlet lips, with the large white teeth glittering like pearls between them.

Her attire was neither coarse nor unbecoming—made up, petticoat, bodice, and scarf, of the favorite tricolor.

Who was this woman?

A peasant born and bred on the estates of Villebonne—the daughter of a vine-dresser—whose bold beauty had seemed piquante for a time to the fastidious Count de Villebonne.

His fancy for Jeannette Tricot had been such that she reigned supreme for months; he took her to Paris, and established her in a pretty hotel.

To give Jeannette her due, she did not run the usual course of women of her class.

She really loved her seducer—loved him with the fierceness of her sex and the self-abandonment of her own.

Of course she liked the change from poverty to riches; but the liberal allowance the count offered her on his marriage in no way assuaged her fury when she found his caprice for her was at an end.

Poor unsophisticated peasant girl! She had actually persuaded herself that Count Villebonne really loved her.

She was so insane as to be indignant at his marriage; she spat upon his alms, and swore that she would be revenged upon him and upon his wife.

This woman—the discarded mistress—side by side with Achille Noir, another implacable foe!

The element of personal hatred was certainly very strong in those who led the mob to the attack on the Chateau de Villebonne.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT a hideous scene it was—none worse among all the horrible scenes enacted at that terrible epoch throughout the length and breadth of

The great gates of the chateau would have resisted the attack of a mere mob, armed chiefly with pikes and staves.

But there was treachery within the walls—Achille Noir had an agent among the servants.

When the court of the chateau rang to the reverberation of the strokes upon the gates and the outcry of the besiegers, a door which had in old times been used as a sally-port, and which now opened on an ornamental garden, was thrown back, and a file of the populace, led by a handsome youth, were admitted by the traitor.

"Where is the count, Jacques?" inquired this youth.

"In the gallery over the great gate," answered Jacques, picking off your comrade, Citizen Jules, with his rifle. It is to hoped the good patriot, Achille Noir, is well under the shelter of the coping, for, if Achille has sworn to have the heart's blood of the count, monsieur, on his part, swears that he will blow out the brains of the villainous 'sans-culotte,' as he calls our man of the people."

"Mille tonnerres!" replied the youth. "Why do we either of us talk of counts or monsieurs? There are no counts—no gentlemen. Liberty, equality, fraternity! The people only—the people!"

"Aye! the people—the French Republic one and indivisible!"

"The aristocrats to the lanterns!"

"Sword and fire to the foes of the people!"

"Burn over his head the chateau of Henri Villebonne! Starve him in his own dungeons!"

Like the roar of a torrent in mid-winter, the voices of the infuriate mob surged through the halls and galleries of Villebonne.

Like the stampede of wild cattle over the western prairie was the tramp of their heavy feet.

The section of the populace admitted by the traitorous servant, under his direction, made for the great hall.

Even this small section outnumbered by four to one the retainers of the unfortunate De Villebonne.

The men gathered in the hall were cut to pieces, trampled down—instantaneously overwhelmed by the insurgents, who rushed to throw open the great doors, and admit the whole body of their confederates.

The count himself and about a dozen of his servants were stationed in the gallery over the hall.

The din and the uproar of the mob collected before the great gates hindered the count hearing the noise of those admitted into the hall.

He was only aware that the enemy were within the chateau by the crash and tremendous uproar that ensued when the doors were thrown back, and he beheld the rearmost ranks of the besiegers rushing after their companions in front, who disappeared under the span of the deep arch over the doorway.

Then he knew there must have been treachery.

"Save yourself, Philippe!" he said to his brother, who stood beside him. "Save yourselves, my good and faithful friends!" he said to his few faithful servants. "For me it is all over; but it shall go hard yet if I have not the life of the villain who has admitted these wild beasts!"

"I keep beside you to the death, my brother!" said Philippe de Villebonne. "Besides, do you forget there is Emilie, Adele, and your boy?"

"I forget them not, brother," answered the count. "Go you, then; they are in the east gallery. You may possibly escape with them through the forest. But the way to that gallery lies through the hall. I will guard the entrance; and, Philippe, should those yelling fiends overtake you, remember, death from your hand for Adele and my wife, rather than they should fall into the hands of those wretches—aye! and for my boy, too, lest he be tortured as they tortured the little Dauphin!"

Monsieur de Villebonne wrung the hand of his brother.

"Depend upon the honor of a French chevalier to save that of his sister and his brother's wife!" he replied.

Then the two, followed by the faithful servants, who refused to abandon them, descended to the hall.

Their appearance was the signal for a yell

worthy of red Indians on the war path; and those savages were never more cruel than were the French in the fury of their Revolution.

Beautifully-wrought bronze lamps were suspended from the groined roof, for the Chateau de Villebonne was built in the palmy days of French Gothic architecture. These lamps had been filled with oil, and lighted before the appearance of the mob.

What a horrible scene!

What hideous faces—the features cast in Nature's crassest mould, and now inflamed, swollen, and distorted with brutal passions!

The mob surged and heaved like the boughs of a forest swaying in the winter gale.

And one name rang high in the shouting and yelling—

"The aristocrat called Count de Villebonne—which is he? We will tear his heart out! He shall swing from his own roof tree!"

"He, yonder, with the star on his breast. He is the aristocrat who has ground you into the dust, my friends, and betrayed your daughters and your wives?"

It was the recreant servant, Jacques, who thus pointed out his master to the infuriated people.

The words had scarce passed his lips when a pistol bullet crashed through his brain, and he fell dead, to be trampled under the feet of the infuriate wretches, who fought, and tugged, and struggled with each other to be first in seizing the unfortunate nobleman.

Whatever had been the tyranny or the profligacy of the Count de Villebonne, he was equal to the proud boast of his high descent in that, his last hour.

He cast away the pistol with which he had dealt to Jacques the reward of his treachery, and, with the sword which a brave ancestor had worn at Malplaquet, he beat back the foremost of his assailants.

Not on the field of that famous battle did the sword of the old Count de Villebonne do more terrible execution against the allied armies, the foes of France, commanded by Marlborough, than it now wrought upon her own savage and maddened sons.

All who ventured within the sweep of that terrible sword fell back either dead or mortally wounded.

The rage of the mob knew no bounds.

Was one aristocrat to defy a hundred republicans? What then became of equality?

Craft effected what courage failed in.

The count stood with his back to one of the massive pillars that supported the groined roof of the hall.

Behind that pillar crept one of the "bonnets rouge," and with a blow of his pike he struck down the count's sword arm.

The sharp point of the weapon tore the muscles and tendons of the wrist, and the bones were splintered by the weight of the blow, dealt by a gigantic ruffian who had worked in an iron foundry.

De Villebonne staggered, and dropped his sword, but caught it in his left hand, and, still undaunted, would have maintained the fight.

But the blood poured from his wound, his guard with the left hand was feeble, and, like hounds falling upon a stag, his foes surrounded him with hue and cry.

Then, amid oaths, invectives, and shouts of demoniac laughter, rang out the refrain of the horrible song:

"Aristocrats to the lanterns!"

A rope was ready, hands red with blood made the running noose, and slung it round De Villebonne's throat, while others of the revolutionists heaved the end of the rope round one of the quaint gargoyles at the capital of the buttress, so that it seemed as if the grinning face of a fiend was looking down to mock at the murder of the last Villebonne in his ancestral hall.

The count did not wink one eyelid—even at that supreme moment he regarded his murderers with a glance of mingled defiance and contempt.

That manifest contempt exasperated the rage of the mob beyond all else.

The yells and execrations redoubled, but high above all now rose the clamor of two voices—one hoarse and strong, the other shrill and piercing—

the rough tones of a man, the sharp high notes of a furious woman.

"Stay your hands, comrades! It is for me—the son of the sovereign people, whom the malice of this aristocrat condemned to the oar of the galley slave—it is for me of all others to minister to the justice of the people, and bring him to his doom!"

So cried the man.

"Well said, Citizen Achille!" exclaimed the woman. "But I—I, Jeannette Tricot—must have a word or two with this pig of an aristocrat before he dies! Ha! ha! Henri, sometime Count de Villebonne, hast thou forgotten Jeannette, whom you swore you loved—who left her old father to perish for your sake? I loved thee—I loved thee, Henri, in those days, when you swore my eyes were bright, and my lips sweeter and redder than the cherry. But was I—a woman of the people—a poor wretch—not too much honored by thy dishonest love? And thou didst cast me aside; thou didst send me gold when you wedded with the aristocrat—gold to pay me for my love! Ah! villain, did I not spurn thine alms—tell thee the hour of my vengeance would come? It has come, vile oppressor—insolent seducer—it has come! Here, dost thou know this face? Is it more beautiful now than poor Jeannette's? Are the eyes brighter—the lips a riper red? Ha! ha!" and Jeannette laughed wildly, "dost thou know this face? Kiss the lips, Henri; though cold and pale, they are the lips of thy wife!"

As the horrible woman spoke she took from under her scarf the gory and newly-severed head of a beautiful female, and held it towards De Villebonne.

He bent down and kissed the livid brow, the snowy whiteness of which was all spotted and smeared with blood.

Then he turned to Jeannette, and exclaimed, in tones of bitter sarcasm:

"Thy revenge is like thyself, Jeannette—coarse and stupid!"

"Coarse and stupid, do you say?" screamed Jeannette. "Liar! you will not own how you feel it. I tell thee it was my hand that struck down thy wife—my hand that brained the urchin clinging to her robe; I could have pitied the pretty boy, and loved him, for he was yours; but he was hers also, and I slew him."

"Still I repeat thou hadst a dull vengeance, Jeannette," returned the count. "Thou didst save my wife and my boy from thy companions!"

"Tell me not that—tell me not that! Weep, wail, gnash thy teeth, Henri; but do not tell me that my revenge is vain!" cried Jeannette, frantically, as she dashed down the bleeding head at the count's feet.

The unhappy nobleman stooped, and, twining his left hand in the long hair, would have lifted up the ghastly token; but the wrath of Jeannette's confederates was a mere wanton cruelty—the revenge of the felon, Achille Noir, as base as his crime. He struck the count in the back as he stooped, and the knife entered to the hilt.

Then the rabble rout closed in.

They had not patience to execute their design of hanging the aristocrat—they tore, and stabbed, and struck long after life was extinct, and stabs were inflicted on a senseless corpse.

CHAPTER III.

ADELE DE VILLEBONNE.

THE orgie, as well as the butchery, was worthy of devils. Long tables were drawn out in the hall, the tessellated pavement of which ran red with blood.

The sans-culottes spread themselves over the chateau; they ransacked the larder and cellars, where they found plenty of provisions—plenty of rare wine.

And they gorged upon venison and dainty pasties, and flooded their hoarse throats with Chateau Margaux, and Vin de Beaume; the viands, the roast pheasants, and delicate confections, were served on silver dishes; and their coarse lips quaffed eau-de-vie, as well as wine, from silver goblets.

Achille Noir sat at the head of the table, with Jeannette at his side; and amid the wine cups and the dishes were three hideous objects—the heads

of the count and countess, and of Philippe de Villebonne—for it was not till the young chevalier was cut down that the countess and her little boy were murdered.

With their bloodstained hands, the revolutionists ate and drank, laughed and sang.

Wild and uproarious in their mirth were the horrible company—all save two.

These exceptions were Jeannette Tricot and the young Jules Mortier, who had led that file of the rabble which the traitor Jacques had first admitted to the chateau.

Jeannette drank deeply, draining the large silver cup beside her plate as fast as it was filled by Achille Noir.

But she tasted nothing, and, though her eyes glowed as with a dark fire, there was a frown upon her brow; she was sullenly silent, and the ribald jests of those about her passed unheeded.

Jules Mortier was silent and moody, too, but from another cause.

Little more than a boy in years—for he was scarcely twenty—he had joined the extreme revolutionists, less from a cruel and savage disposition than a blind enthusiasm.

The rage of the French nation then was to compare itself to ancient Rome, to imitate what Charles Dickens, in his powerful "Tale of Two Cities," so justly calls "the questionable virtues of antiquity."

Questionable, indeed; for who could admire the father who condemned his sons to death for a political error?

But Junius Brutus was the favorite hero of Jules Mortier.

The lad had a powerful mind, but it had been perverted. He had poured over the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau, of D'Alembert and Diderot.

The keen and wicked wit of Voltaire, the specious reasoning of D'Alembert and Diderot, had dazzled and bewildered him.

He was ashamed of Christianity; but he had a tender and warm heart, and he consoled himself for the loss of Christian faith and charity with the sentimentalities of Rousseau.

Sentimentality, however, is but too often a mask for callous selfishness, and Rousseau was in reality a hard-hearted profligate, who abandoned his own children to be brought up in the foundling hospitals.

The boy Mortier, however, did not look closely into the character of his idols; but his generous sympathies were shocked at the coarseness and vulgarity, no less than the horror, of the scene at the Chateau de Villebonne.

He sickened at the sight of the three heads upon the table amid the dishes of meat, the bread, and the wine.

While his horrible associates drank, and swore, and sang, his thoughts involuntarily went back to the teachings of his childhood, and he felt himself amid an assembly of the lowest ministers of Satan.

Soon the sans-culottes began to quarrel among themselves.

They had torn the embroidered counterpanes from the beds, the hangings of silk and satin from the walls.

The rare and rich articles—whether of use or ornament—were brought into the great hall, and piled in one large heap.

After the division of the spoil the chateau was to be set on fire.

This was the programme.

But over the division of the spoil it was that the bandits quarreled.

Achille Noir, as captain and leader of the enterprise, sought to appropriate more than his due share.

Jules Mortier was appealed to, for he was second in command. But Jules was not a thief nor a burglar; he was a wild enthusiast, hating royalty, hating aristocracy, and with impossible notions of the perfectibility of fallen, corrupt human nature.

When he looked at those who had stormed the Chateau de Villebonne—ribald, intoxicated, murderous wretches—he was fain to own that they were a long way from perfectibility.

Jules was himself of a fierce temper, and when appealed to, he consigned the appellants to a place of punishment not recognized in the code of

modern philosophy, and, disclaiming all share in plunder for himself, he rushed out into the grounds of the chateau.

Away—away where the sounds of the horrible contention could not reach his ears—where his eyes would not be shocked by the sight of the three ghastly blood-stained heads, and the yet more repulsive aspect of the banditti!

Out through the ornamental grounds—the gates of which had been broken down—into the park, out of sight and sound both of the revelry and the contention at the chateau!

What a contrast!

There all was rage and fury—here all peace and lovely calm.

The pure white moon was sailing high amid the clouds, and casting long shafts of silvery radiance betwixt the knotted boughs of the oak and beech, on the tangle of the hawthorn and wild rose, while on the pink-and-white blossoms the dew glittered like diamonds.

In place of the hoarse or shrill voices of the fierce men and maddened women could be heard the gentle murmur of the zephyr among the foliage "stealing and giving odors," the light patter of a stag's hoofs as it skimmed athwart some open glade, or the song of the nightingale in the near thicket. What a contrast!

The purity, the beauty, the holiness of the woodland scene impressed itself on the wild soul of the young republican.

In the hush of the lovely summer night a slight rustling in the thicket attracted his attention.

He turned his head, imagining merely that he had startled some fawn in the thicket, when a slim female figure started up, and with shrieks of dismay, sped along the avenue, which was sparsely lighted by the rays of the moon here and there penetrating through the thick foliage.

A glimpse of the affrighted face in the gleam of the moon, showed Jules Mortier that the fugitive was young and beautiful.

It showed her, too, the form and features of a young and remarkably handsome man; but, alas! the horrible "bonnet rouge" surmounted his clustering raven curls, and, disregarding his entreaties that she would stop, the girl fled, till, her foot coming in contact with the gnarled roots of a tree, she fell, violently spraining her ankle.

As tenderly and courteously as a preux chevalier of the court could have done, the young man raised her in his arms, inquiring whether she was hurt.

"Oh! spare me! Save me!" cried the girl, incoherently. "Oh! do not kill me—do not give me up to those dreadful people!"

"Kill you, give you up? Never!" exclaimed the youth.

"And yet," cried the girl, in trembling accents, and vainly endeavoring, while she spoke, to release herself from the strong grasp of Jules Mortier, "you were with those terrible people—you wear the red cap! Ah, me! there is blood upon your garments! Did it flow in the veins of my brave brothers, of my poor sister, or her innocent boy? You are a murderer like the rest; but if I, too, must die, kill me here, out in the green woods—kill me with your own hands! Subject me not to the touch of those grim and horrible wretches who polluted the lips of poor Emilie with their foul kisses ere they killed her!"

"Who are you? What is your name?" exclaimed Mortier.

"I am Adele de Villebonne, sister of the count," answered the girl proudly. "You do not look so base—so cruel—as those wretches; you are enough of a French gentleman to save me from death at their hands! You will kill me yourself!"

CHAPTER IV.

A REPUBLICAN'S LOVE.

"I AM no gentleman!" exclaimed Jules Mortier. "I am a citizen of the French Republic; but do not think, lady, that your scented aristocrats alone have humanity and honor. I will save you from falling into the hands of Achille Noir; but I will not kill you myself. The proud aristocrats, your brothers, deserved to die; but, had I my will, there should be no warring upon women and children!"

* * * * *

Six months had elapsed. The reign of terror was at its height; the Infernal Triumvirate—as it was so justly called—was in the zenith of its power.

The terrible association was not broken; the dagger of Charlotte Corday had not yet found out Marat, and the cold snake-like cunning of Robespierre had not yet enabled him to supersede the brutal, but less bloodthirsty Danton.

It seems scarcely credible that, amid all the scenes of blood and horror, Paris was still gay.

The theatres were crowded; the press teemed with articles, all of them upholding the new doctrine of liberty and equality, and most of them grossly licentious.

Yes—there was singing, dancing, and feasting in Paris even during the Reign of Terror.

Luxury, too, there was in abundance. The revolutionary leaders revelled in wealth.

Be sure there are no tyrants so greedy or luxurious as those who preach an equal division of property. Those who propound this doctrine are knaves—those who believe in it merely fools.

Not in the dress or apartments of the sensual Danton himself, however, was there a greater display of wealth and luxury than in a charming little hotel near the Elysee, occupied by Jules Mortier.

The classic furore pervaded the furniture and adornments of the house.

The principal saloon might have been modelled from a Roman interior—not from Rome, however, in the days of its noble and grand simplicity, but from Rome in its decay, when vice was rampant, and the most epicurean luxury prevailed.

Draperies and cushions of embroidered silk, fringes of gold and silver thread, marble and porcelain vases of classic form, filled in the midst of a severe winter with the choicest flowers, tables of ebony and ivory inlaid with gold, a costly carpet of tiger skins on the floor, a dainty little supper, to furnish which the resources of a French cuisine had been exhausted, and, lastly, the attire of the fair occupant of the saloon attested the wealth now possessed by Jules Mortier, who two years before was only a lawyer's clerk.

Was she the wife of Jules, that golden-haired lovely creature, with her robe of Tyrian dye, woven of some soft woollen material, and heavily bordered with gold.

Strings of pearl twined with the golden hair bound in its classic fashion round the head, from which might have been modelled that of the marble Psyche that adorned the apartment.

Rubies and diamonds blazed upon the white neck, and arms, and a fillet of the same magnificent gems contrasted with the ivory of the white smooth brow.

The fashion of the robe was so rigidly classic in form that the figure was rather draped than clad; and modesty might have demurred at the liberal display of the bosom, a narrow strap alone crossing the shoulder.

The *chaussure* was a scarlet sandal, and an exquisitely-formed foot and ankle peeped from under the purple robe.

Who was this beautiful creature, surrounded with luxury, when ruin and devastation spread over France?

She was a daughter of the nobles; her name was Adele de Villebonne, and she was the wife of Jules Mortier in republican fashion—his mistress only, her brothers would have said; and assuredly, if on that fearful night when they both perished, they could have had a prescience of their sister's fate, they would have slain her with their own hands ere Jules Mortier crossed the threshold of Villebonne.

Was Adele the willing companion of the young republican—of the man who had brought desolation on her father's home?

Most willingly—most happily—she went through the form of a republican marriage.

Do not blame her—she was but sixteen years of age—she was timid, frivolous and luxurious.

After the dreadful night at Villebonne she lay for weeks in a delirious fever at Jules Mortier's lodgings. During all that time, and when she became convalescent, she was supported by Jules.

The fierce young republican became mild, gentle and refined in his love for this fair girl.

As soon as she was able to bear removal he took

her to Paris, where he obtained for her the attendance of the best physicians.

Despite his infatuation for Adele, however, he abated no jot of his hatred to the class among which she was born.

But they were neither republican nor aristocrat with each other—they were only lovers.

Mortier's love for Adele was a passion which words are feeble to describe; and the young girl, though she shuddered at the fate of her family, was but vaguely aware how far Mortier was concerned in it.

He was devoted to her, heart and soul; he was high in favor with the popular leaders, and surrounded her with luxuries; he was remarkably handsome, and she loved him as much as it was in her vain and frivolous nature to love.

In spite of his devotion to her, however, Jules was obliged to leave her much alone.

He was a popular member of the National Convention, by no craft, but merely by the force and candor of his character; he was a favorite with all the terrible Triumvirs, even Maximilian Robespierre himself.

It may be marvelled at that the latter ascetic as well as bloodthirsty demagogue should have tolerated Mortier's connection with such a daughter of aristocrats as Adele.

But Robespierre was cunning.

"Wait," he said to himself. "The boy is a sincere republican. Sooner or later the girl will play him false; then he will make her a holocaust, and become more than ever loyal to the Republic!"

And so he gave line and liberty to Jules Mortier, and laughed gaily to himself.

Was Robespierre correct in his conjectures?

Adele de Villebonne was a vain, frivolous, and withal luxurious French coquette.

Her engagement to Eugene St. Aubin was of the class which prevails to this day in France, a mere conventional agreement with her elder brother and his wife as her guardians.

The Captain St. Aubin was a great landed proprietor, a gallant soldier, and a favored courtier.

Adele would have been well content to marry him; she would have been equally content to marry any other wealthy and high-born gentleman.

All the love of which her weak nature was capable was bestowed on Jules Mortier.

He had saved her on that night of massacre at Villebonne, and gratitude might have had something to do with that love; it had little to do with that tender and noble sentiment—it was the cowardly clinging of a feeble creature to a strong one.

The handsome person and enthusiastic devotion of Jules of course impressed her, despite her frivolity—she fancied herself very much in love with him; and, in truth, as much as she could love, she loved him.

As time rolled on, however, and the awful Reign of Terror approached its height, and the stern character of Mortier became fully developed, the feeble Adele, incapable of understanding his grand though misdirected energies, was appalled, and the fancy which she had called love gave place to fear.

Every day was signalized by fresh sacrifices, many of the victims being persons whom she had known and been attached to, and all of them claiming a sort of sympathy from her, as of her own class.

Poor Jules Mortier, demented alike with love and republicanism, would come home and detail to her the proceedings of the Convention, and boast of the French Republic one and indivisible, and how that republic should emulate the glories of ancient Rome.

He did not perceive the shuddering horror with which Adele listened, and when she clung to him, and hid her head in his bosom, he thought it was in love—not in fear.

But, if Jules Mortier was so blinded by his passion for Adele Villebonne that he forgot she was an aristocrat, the girl had a foe who hated her, and did not forget—a foe who hated her as a woman, with all a woman's hatred, made more relentless because such wild and passionate devotion as that of Mortier had not been won by her—because she had herself been wooed and betrayed by an aristocrat, and that aristocrat—Adele's brother.

This vindictive woman, too, was Jeannette Tri-

cot, the fury who had led the band of sans-culottes who had stormed the Chateau de Villebonne.

This woman, cunning and malignant as a spider in his web, had kept a watch that never relaxed upon the unfortunate Adele.

For many months she had ground her teeth with rage that Adele, living in luxury, and beloved by the handsome young republican, afforded not the slightest clue upon which even the malice of Jeannette could furnish a suspicion.

But, like the spider, who, if its thread breaks twenty times, still obstinately spins a new one, the vigilance of Jeannette gave her an opportunity at last.

This opportunity was furnished—not by Adele's fickleness and frivolity, but by such real tenderness as was in her girlish disposition.

CHAPTER V.

THE DENOUNCED.

It was on a wild night, when want as well as terror brooded over one-half the inhabitants of Paris—when cold and hunger attested the benefits which the people derived from the highly-praised Republic—that Jeannette Tricot, in a dark, gloomy apartment of an old hotel where Mortier was in the habit of meeting his political associates, poured into his ears the poison which was to convert all his love for Adele into deadly hate.

He had imprinted fervent kisses on the rosy lips of Adele at parting.

He had turned back to admire her beauty, more exquisite in her classic robe, that fell in graceful folds, confined to her slender waist with a cæstus of jewels, with a diadem of pearls braiding back her beautiful hair, and sandals on her tiny feet, than when clad in the gorgeous but cumbersome dress of the old regime—the breccaded petticoat, monstrous hoop, powdered hair, and high-heeled shoes.

Light, warmth, and perfume surrounded Adele.

In a vast and dreary chamber, unfurnished save for a few cumbrous old-fashioned chairs, and the table on which he leans moodily, his hands shading his face from the glare of the solitary lamp, sat Jules Mortier.

Opposite to him stood Jeannette Tricot—a handsome woman, with the beauty which was that of a fiend in the flashing of her bold black eyes, in the sneer on her scarlet lip, as she told the republican how his beauty of the noblesse was betraying him—was corresponding with her old lover, an aristocrat like herself—was planning an elopement with Eugene St. Aubin.

Jules Mortier sat immovable while the woman told her story.

He was proud of heart—that son of the people. He was shrewd of sense and wit.

He believed every word of the story told by Jeannette, and he knew that it was in personal hatred of Adele that she told it.

But, oh! the agony of his proud and loving soul!

The ruthless woman was tearing up by the roots the one tender passion of his strong fierce nature.

He hid his face; he would not that she should read her triumph there.

Jeannette finished her story:

"If you doubt me, citizen, go at once to the gilded cage of your pretty bird, and you will find it pluming its wings for a flight with its old mate."

An irrepressible groan burst from the bosom of Mortier, but he made no reply to the taunts of Jeannette.

"Citizen," she then said, insolently, "you make no answer. It seems to me that, in your love for this aristocrat, you forget your duty. I shall denounce Adele myself! The vile aristocrat—she owes her head to Mother Guillotine if it were but for bewitching a true and honest citizen like yourself!"

Then Jules Mortier rose up as if an asp had stung him.

Even the audacious Jeannette recoiled at the sight of the altered face.

Years seemed to have passed over him. His complexion had a leaden hue; the seal of an eternal despair was printed on his brow; an infernal fire was blazing in his eyes.

"Wretch!" he exclaimed, "it is for no love of liberty that you would denounce Adele—it is the malignant hatred of a vile woman, envious of her beauty! Oh! Adele, Adele—my pearl that is tarnished—my flower that is crushed! Yes, Adele, thou must die—thou must die! I, who have so loved thee, must yield thee up as a foe of the Republic. But no tongue save mine shall denounce thee! Go, Jeannette Tricot, fear not—that beautiful head shall fall beneath the axe! Let thy hatred be content with that. She is a holocaust, and not a criminal. It shall not be for thy malevolence to pronounce her doom! It is a sacrifice, and not a murder; and upon the altar of Liberty I will yield up the life of Adele!"

Jules Mortier kept his word.

He found that Jeannette Tricot had told the truth. The unfortunate Adele had arranged with Eugene St. Aubin to escape with him to England.

Jules Mortier denounced them both.

Robespierre smiled grimly as he signed the warrant for their execution.

"Now," he said, "Jules Mortier will be a faithful servant of the Republic; he will never more yield to that weak sense of pity which is treason to the cause of the people!"

Robespierre did not err.

Just before the fall of Marat a young girl came to Jules Mortier to beg that he would interfere to save her lover.

"He was so young, and looked so tender and sad," she said; "surely he would pity her—he would pity her lover!"

"I pity no one, citizeness! I have not pitied myself. Come—I will show you the proof!"

The voice of Jules Mortier was hard and sardonic as he spoke.

He offered his hand to the young girl, and led her into an adjoining chamber.

It was hung with black, and in the centre was a small round table of white marble.

A glass case was set on the table, and a strong lamp threw a glare on the object it contained.

A dismal sight—the head of a beautiful young girl, preserved by some chemical process!

The rich golden hair streamed back; the eyes were open, and shone with a ghostly phosphorescent glare.

"Look!" cried Mortier. That head was the head of my beloved! She was a traitress—false to me, false to the Republic. I—I who loved her better than my own life—denounced her! Do you think I can pity you and your lover—I, who had no pity for myself? No, no! Adele—Adele, my beloved; pity have I for none! To pity others is to have murdered thee!"

Jules Mortier threw himself on his knees in a paroxysm of grief, and the petitioner stole away weeping.

Christmas on the Ice.

CHAPTER I.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS.

"THE most attractive thing in the world to me always was and always will be a balloon.

"I know no ecstasy so great as that of soaring grandly to the sky, and looking down upon the world until all things fade away save the beautiful clouds as they roll beneath or hover betwixt heaven and earth.

"In order to gratify this passion of mine for aeronautical voyages, I have run many risks and passed through adventures so strange and romantic, that were I to relate them to strangers they would in all probability believe I was trying to palm off 'travelers' lies' upon them.

"You, however, who have known me so long, and are acquainted with many of the strange episodes of my life, will entertain no doubt as to the veracity of the account with which it is my intention to furnish you, of how I once spent Christmas on the ice.

"I had deadly foes to deal with then.

"Adolph Caspar sought my life.

"And in the most extraordinary manner he endeavored to accomplish my destruction.

"Had his plot succeeded, Adolph Caspar's crime would never have been detected.

"The cause of his hatred is easily explained.

"We were both madly in love with the same young lady.

"Amine Redruth.

"That was her name.

"Amine, at the time of which I am speaking, was barely seventeen years of age, and then, as now, I considered her unrivalled for the beauty of her person and the loveliness of her soul.

"From her name you may gather that she was of Eastern extraction.

"Her father was a wealthy English merchant; her mother, an Arabian princess.

"Of that union Amine was the sole offshoot.

"Consequently she was heiress.

"Adolph Caspar, then a young man of my own age—one-and-twenty—a spendthrift and a gambler, had designs upon Annie Redruth and her fortune.

"In a word, he was my rival.

"Adolph was tall, and very stout for his age, with fair hair and a florid complexion. There was ever a set smile upon his countenance. And a peculiarly cold glitter in his steel gray eyes.

"By birth he was a German, and, like many of his countrymen, a thoroughly scientific man.

"There was one trait in his character in which he resembled me.

"He was fond of balloons.

"At the time of which I am speaking, it is hardly necessary to remind you I had not acquired that wealth and fame as an artist which at the present moment I enjoy.

"Nevertheless, I was not altogether unknown, and managed, by dint of much hard work, to maintain a respectable position.

"My studio was in the neighborhood of Fitzroy Square, and, although it served as my bed-chamber also, I was not a little proud of it.

"Nor without reason, for my 'brother brushes' were wont to go into raptures over my collection of antiquities.

"One bright November morning, when I was making the most of an unusually favorable light, there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," I cried, and glancing over my palette, observed with astonishment the entrance of my rival.

"What was the object of this most unexpected visit?"

"Had he brought me a challenge?"

"Herr Caspar?" I exclaimed.

"He smiled, and bowed.

"You are doubtless surprised," said he, "at seeing me here, but not so much so, I venture to think, as you will be when acquainted with the object of my visit."

"Be seated, sir, I pray."

"And, as I spoke, my palette and brushes found their way to the table, which was littered with a miscellaneous collection of articles necessary to the performance of my duties.

"In the first place," replied Adolph Caspar, availing himself of my invitation, "I may as well inform you of my intention to give up all pretensions to the hand of Miss Redruth. The prosecution of so hopeless a suit cannot benefit me, while it could hardly fail to cause annoyance to others.

"To this I readily assented.

"It was not merely to give you this assurance that I called," continued Adolph, smiling blandly, "but to acquaint you with a scheme, in the carrying out of which I hope to secure your hearty co-operation."

"I regarded him attentively for a moment, but he flinched not from my searching gaze.

"Proceed."

"I wish to form a club."

"With what object?" I inquired.

"The creation of a monster balloon, in which we can journey all round the world for the purpose of scientific investigation."

"I grasped at the idea at once, and favored my former rival with a look of admiration.

"Capital!" I cried. "Often have I longed to carry out some such project, but have been deterred by two difficulties, seemingly insuperable. You have solved the problem, however, and the obstacles no longer exist."

"And those difficulties," asked Adolph. "What were they?"

"The great expense, in the first place, of making and fitting up such a balloon as we should require; and in the second, of getting together the requisite number of daring and thoroughly competent persons to assist in the carrying out of the scheme."

"Adolph Caspar rubbed his hands and laughed.

"Those are the very obstacles with which I have had to contend!" he cried; "but, as you say, the problem has been solved. We form a club, and share alike the expenses and perils of the experiment."

"Have you calculated the amount required?"

"To a nicety."

"What do you make it?"

"Three thousand pounds!" replied Adolph Caspar. "So, that all we require are six members who are ready to invest five hundred pounds each in the undertaking."

"And the six members?"

"We only require one to complete the number, and that is why I came to you. Here is a list of the names."

"He handed me a piece of paper, on which appeared the following catalogue:

"Owen Grantham, Esq."

"Professor Ludwig Luther Von Schmack, M.R.L.F.S."

"Stephen Velven, Esq."

"Warren Warr, Esq."

"Herr Adolph Caspar."

"These names I read aloud.

"So you see," said Adolph Caspar, "all you have to do is to put your autograph to that piece of paper, and the thing is virtually done. The gentlemen selected are not all entire strangers to you."

"No. I know them all save the professor, and, of course, have heard of him."

"And, seizing a pen, I hastily affixed my signature to the document.

"We meet to-night," Adolph Caspar went on, "to discuss particulars. The Balloon Club is held at the 'Admiral Blake.' Be there at eight, and, if convenient, bring the five hundred pounds with you."

"To this I agreed, and, after a little more chat about the matter, Adolph Caspar took his departure, leaving me enraptured with the idea.

"The picture I had so recently commenced was neglected from that hour, and, to the best of my belief, was never finished.

"I was too full of the balloon project to care about anything else, and was right glad when the appointed hour arrived.

"With the five hundred pounds in my pocket-book, I presented myself at the 'Admiral Blake.'

"The club-room was on the first floor.

"Here I found Adolph Caspar, and a short, odd-looking old man, who wore large horn-rimmed spectacles, and bushy red whiskers.

"In this individual I at once recognized Professor Ludwig Luther Schmack, to whom Adolph Caspar introduced me without delay.

"The other members of the club were all punctual in their attendance, and during the evening the arrangements necessary for the perfecting of our scheme were made.

"We were all enthusiasts.

"Consequently, we set to work with a will, and, in less than six weeks, the 'Swallow' was complete in every respect.

"The 'Swallow' was the name of our balloon.

"From Hampstead Heath the ascent was made.

"Our project was, of course, well known in scientific circles, and, consequently, the news became so well circulated, that a vast concourse of people assembled to see us start upon our novel and perilous voyage.

"Loudly the people cheered as we took our seats in the car.

"A minute later and the 'Swallow' was released.

"My cheeks flushed with pleasure as I felt myself being borne rapidly on high.

"Grasping the edge of the car with both hands, I leaned over it, and watched the crowd until the men and women dwindled to the size of dolls, and ultimately vanished entirely.

"Trees and hills alike faded from view.

"We were above the clouds.

"Lovely clouds they were—hung beneath us like curtains of white and rose-tinted lace.

"This is glorious," I cried. "Surely, of all things, a journey through the air is most delightful. At what rate are we traveling now, professor?"

"Not more than sixty miles an hour," replied Von Schmack. "This is nothing to what we shall attain presently."

"Higher and higher we soared.

"Colder and colder grew the atmosphere.

"For this, however, we cared not.

"The 'Swallow' behaved in a manner that filled us with admiration and delight.

"Steadily she held upon her course.

"On through the air we sailed at an increasing speed.

"Caught by a rushing wind, the 'Swallow' was absolutely whirled along.

"It was a thrilling and exciting time.

"Professor Von Schmack, who had the principal direction of the balloon, was in ecstasies all the time.

"He laughed continually, and clapped his hands like some child pleased with a new and interesting toy.

"As for Adolph Caspar, he sat by my side in the car, silent and thoughtful, but with the same set smile hovering as of old around his lips.

"Little did I dream at that moment of the real nature of his thoughts.

"The day wore away.

"Down sank the sun, and up soared the silver moon, whilst one by one the countless stars put forth their points of dazzling light.

"What an ethereal joy it was, traveling as we were there, through that wondrous starry realm!

"Fresh objects of beauty and interest were constantly presented to our view.

"Like the professor, I was in ecstasies.

"That night there was no sleep for us.

"At an early hour on the following morning, the professor opened the valve, and let out sufficient gas to cause the 'Swallow' to gradually descend.

"Wondering where we might be, I looked over the edge of the car, and, as we descended from the clouds, a vast ocean rose to view.

"What is it?"

"The Atlantic," replied the professor. "Throw out some sand, unless you feel inclined for an early bath."

"The ballast was thrown out, and again the 'Swallow' took a skyward flight.

"The ocean was quickly lost to view.

"Now," cried the professor, "hold on for your lives—here it comes."

"What?" demanded Adolph, who had been chatting gaily, and doing his best to inspire my confidence and respect.

"The wind!"

"Scarcely had the reply been given, when an alarming gale struck the balloon, and we experienced the startling and novel sensation of being borne through the air at a rate altogether inconceivable.

"We clung to the ropes like grim death; holding on, in fact, like men who knew that at any moment they might be precipitated into space.

"The 'Swallow,' however, withstood the strain, and, when the gale had ceased, righted herself, much to our relief.

"On through the clouds we journeyed day and night, risking our lives a hundred times between sunset and sunrise, and sunrise and sunset again—now with the ocean beneath us—now with some fair land. Our descents were frequent, and the professor's notes voluminous. Every object worthy of remark was duly recorded in his book.

"I have not, however, space to dwell here upon all the wonders of that voyage.

"Let it suffice that one bright morning we found ourselves in the regions of eternal winter.

"The balloon had been allowed to fall during the night, so that on looking down I beheld, with wonder and delight, those fields of silver ice and weighty masses of congelation which have so long and effectively barred the passage to the Pole.

"My companions were sleeping in the bottom of the car.

"I quickly roused them.

"Behold!" I cried. "Beneath us is the Arctic Ocean."

"My companions were not long in assuring themselves of this fact.

"Bravo!" cried Professor Von Schmack, clapping his hands. "This is just what I had promised myself. We can journey across the ice. What wide fields are here for searching investigation."

"You are right," said Adolph. "But we must have a care. An unknown region may have unknown perils, and perhaps one of us may lose his life when he least expects it, and fancies himself in perfect security."

"I knew not the import of those words then.

"I remember now, however, that as he uttered them, Adolph stole a sidelong glance at me.

"More gas was allowed to escape, and the 'Swallow' descended.

"It would be unwise," said the professor, as we brought the balloon to anchor, "for us all to quit the 'Swallow' together. Some mishap might befall her during our absence, and we should be left to perish on the ice."

"We will divide our party," suggested Adolph. "Velven, Warr, and myself will remain on board the 'Swallow'; whilst Owen Grantham and Laurence Lovelace go with Von Schmack."

"And so it was arranged.

"Armed to the teeth, and muffled to the eyes, we started across the ice.

"A keen northern wind was blowing, and it brought with it a few feathery flakes of snow.

"That before long there would be a storm we had no doubt, but cared not.

"The 'Swallow' was in the charge of experienced men, and for ourselves we had no concern.

"All we thought of was the novelty of the situation, and the grandeur of the surrounding scenery.

"On every hand rose up glittering pinnacles of ice, the ever varying forms of which assumed beautiful and fantastic shapes.

"Each moment some fresh object of interest and beauty attracted our attention as we walked along, leaving tracks behind us where, in all probability, human footsteps had never before appeared.

"The individual objects upon which our wondering eyes rested, had, in all likelihood, never before been seen by civilized men.

"Suddenly Von Schmack uttered an exclamation.

"Mine Gott! What a lovely specimen of the Polar bear! With what an air of grace and cordiality he advances to welcome us to his native regions!"

"Glancing in the direction indicated by the overjoyed professor, I beheld not one, but two specimens of the Polar bear.

"They were coming straight towards us, grinning, showing their glistening teeth, and holding forth their fore-paws in a manner extremely suggestive of hugging.

"Out came the professor's note-book; in fact, it never seemed to the learned and scientific man that the bears could possibly entertain any offensive designs against gentlemen of such honorable and pacific pursuits.

"Up went my rifle, however, and Laurence simultaneously levelled his piece at the other bear.

"Two sharp and clear reports awoke the echoes of the mighty icebergs which towered around.

"The bears paused.

"Our aims have been true.

"Both beasts were wounded.

"But neither fatally.

"Setting up a horrible noise, they again moved towards us.

"Once more our breech-loaders rung out upon the icy air.

"By this time they were so close, that inexperienced marksmen would not have failed to hit them.

"My ball entering the left eye of the beast at which I had fired, penetrated to the brain, and he rolled over dead.

"Laurence Lovelace, however, was less successful.

"His shot took effect upon the other beast's left shoulder.

"With a roar of pain, the animal turned round and commenced a hasty retreat.

"Laurence, however, was determined to have the bear's skin for a trophy, and started after him full speed, loading his rifle as he ran.

"Then there was another flash and a third port.

"This brought him to a halt.

"Another minute and Laurence was upon him, and clubbing his rifle he brought the brass-bound butt down upon the beast's head with a force that would have felled a buffalo.

"The white bear rolled over in the snow, and Laurence Lovelace drew his hunting-knife in triumph.

"This was an example I was not slow to follow, and, having had some practice in the art, quickly stripped my victim of his hide.

"Delighted beyond measure at our success, we determined to return to our companions at once, in order to display our spoils.

"We were seven or eight miles from where the 'Swallow' was anchored.

"There was no difficulty in retracing our steps.

"If such aid had been requisite, there was our own trail to follow clear enough.

"By this time the snow had commenced to fall heavily, however, so that the footprints must soon be utterly obliterated.

"The intensity of the cold alone would have made loitering unpleasant, and so we started back at a run.

"Well was it for us we did so.

"Otherwise, our fate would have been terrible to contemplate.

"In very fair time the distance was covered.

"At length we came in sight of the balloon.

"But what caused us to halt so suddenly?"

"Why did we pause and regard the 'Swallow' with looks of mingled apprehension and incredulity?"

"Had our friends forgotten our existence?"

"This was indeed a very natural question to occur to us just then, for we saw the balloon rise slowly in the air.

"The grapnels had been cast, and the 'Swallow' was soaring away with only three of her passengers in the car.

"Mine Gott!" exclaimed the horrified Von Schmack. "We are betrayed; they are going to leave us here to perish on the ice! They leave us here on Christmas Eve to die!"

CHAPTER II.

"It was hard to believe that our late companions could be guilty of conduct so utterly base and inhuman.

"But how could we doubt?"

"The balloon was sailing away.

"We were being left behind.

"My God!" exclaimed Laurence Lovelace. "Surely they cannot mean to leave us here to freeze and starve to death. No, no! It is a joke; they are doing it to have a lark with us, and will not let the 'Swallow' soar so high that they cannot see us."

"Heaven help us if they do!" cried the professor. "We cannot manufacture balloons out of bear-skins; or even if science could accomplish so much, we have no resources. Coal, I have no doubt, may be found, but—"

"Come on," I cried, interrupting him; "we can do no good by standing here."

"And, shouting at the top of my voice, I started with a run.

"My two companions instantly did likewise.

"The 'Swallow' was scarcely free, and we might even yet succeed in catching hold of the long rope which hung from the bottom of the car.

"It is not easy work to run upon rugged and snow-mantled ice.

"But our circumstances rendered us desperate, and we tore madly along at a speed I never knew until then it was possible for us to attain.

"The balloon, however, got beyond our reach.

"In vain we made frantic leaps in the hope of being able to catch hold of the rope which hung so tantalizingly above.

"Mocking laughter from the car greeted each fresh failure, and for a time the balloon remained

most stationary in the air just beyond our reach. Placing my hand to my mouth, I shouted lustily:

"Ahoy! Adolph Caspar—ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" came back the answering hail.

"For God's sake, open the valve and come down."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"There was something positively fiendish in the mocking laughter which pealed over the ice."

"This is surely a joke," I yelled. "You cannot be in earnest. You are only doing this to frighten us."

"Yes, it is a joke; and a rare joke, too," replied Adolph, in a manner so significant, that there was no mistaking his meaning—"that is, for us; you know. A merry Christmas to you all! Ha! ha! ha! Have you any message for Amine?"

"This was the first time her name had been mentioned since the hour when Adolph Caspar had called upon me with the proposal I now so bitterly repented having accepted."

"Like a flash of light the truth broke upon my mind."

"In an instant I comprehended all, and was horrified at the cold-blooded villainy of my treacherous rival."

"For the double purpose of removing me from his path and accomplishing his revenge, he had invented this fiendish trap, and I had fallen into it."

"At first I was too thunderstruck—too horrified to speak."

"My brain reeled."

"With an effort, however, I so far recovered as to regain command over my voice."

"Villain! what mean you?"

"I mean to leave you here to perish. No one will ever know what has become of you. I have nothing to fear in the way of discovery, and Amine will yet be mine. I'll win her love and her money too. Ha! ha! ha! I'm sorry for your two companions, but it can't be helped. They would bear witness against us, you know, and that would never do. Adieu—adieu! and may you spend a merry Christmas!—Ha! ha! ha!"

"Adolph Caspar leaned over the edge of the car, and made a mocking gesture."

"As he did so, we could tell by the undisguised exultation of his satanic features that he was indeed in earnest."

"Warr," I cried, almost frantic at seeing the balloon again begin to rise—"Warr and Velven, you surely will not permit this. You cannot sit and look calmly on while so horrible an outrage is being committed."

"They are in my power," laughed Adolph. "Adieu, and a merry Christmas!"

"The balloon rose higher."

"The state of our minds at that moment can more easily be imagined than described."

"In vain we shouted ourselves hoarse."

"Higher and higher rose the 'Swallow.'"

"The horror and despair of my companions if possible exceeded my own."

"Neither Von Schmack nor Laurence Lovelace displayed any presence of mind whatever."

"But I was not to be so easily left behind as Adolph Caspar had supposed."

"If I perished he should perish also."

"We would not perish unavenged."

"Our murderers should share our doom."

"Their bones should likewise whiten on those interminable fields of ice."

"Quick as the thought which prompted the action, I raised my rifle and leveled it at the balloon."

"Come down," I yelled—"come down, miscreants, or by heaven I'll fire! Von Schmack—Laurence—do as I am doing, and fire when I give the word."

"This order they obeyed."

"Thus three rifles were leveled at the silk."

"This was a contingency for which the villains were not prepared."

"They knew full well that the rush of a bullet is swifter than the ascent of a balloon."

"And they also were aware that mine was no idle threat, and that if I did fire I should not miss my mark, though it had been a bird upon the wing instead of so huge and steady an object as a balloon."

"Open the valve," I shouted. "Ascend another yard, and I fire!"

"This demand was at once complied with."

"Although the 'Swallow' was not immediately lowered, she became stationary."

"Von Schmack grinned as he recognized the fact that we were masters of the situation."

"Satisfaction gleamed from Laurence Lovelace's blue eyes."

"Now, then, villains," I cried, "if you don't want to come down with a run, you will lower yourselves at once. I shall count three, and fire."

"Slowly the 'Swallow' descended."

"We still covered her with our rifles."

"Lower and lower she came."

"The car was only a few yards above our heads."

"Had we chosen we could have seized the rope easily enough now."

"It was, in fact, trailing in the snow."

"Of course, there no longer existed any desire on our part to touch it."

"We had gained our end."

"The balloon was recovered."

"Another minute, and the car grounded on the ice."

"As it did so, we clung desperately to the car."

"Three vivid flashes streamed from it, and three sharp reports rang out."

"A bullet sung past my left ear."

"The professor uttered a shout, and Laurence Lovelace an angry cry."

"Then the miscreants who had fired, bounded from the car, and rushed upon us."

"Dropping my rifle, I closed with Adolph Caspar, and a deadly struggle ensued."

"The German was a tall, powerful man, and he proved himself an accomplished wrestler."

"I also am an adept in the art, as he quickly discovered, and, at the onset, succeeded in wresting from his hand a dagger, which he had hoped to sheathe in my heart."

"Fiercely we tugged and strained, and quickly lost our footing on the slippery ice."

"Over and over the snow we rolled, each striving our utmost to obtain the mastery, for we knew that it was a struggle for life."

"If Adolph was the victor, his dagger would terminate my earthly career."

"And if I overcame him, he would be taken a prisoner to England, and there handed over to those authorities who would deal with him according to our laws."

"That was my settled determination, and I strove with all my might to carry it out."

"We fought in silence."

"Not a single word did either speak."

"Adolph Caspar kept his eyes fastened upon mine, and in them I read the deadly purpose of his sinful soul."

"At length I succeeded in getting him under me and holding him down."

"He was thoroughly exhausted, and utterly at my mercy."

"I had my knee upon his chest, and my fingers round his throat, which I had pressed so tightly that he was growing black in the face."

"Satisfied that he would be unable to rise unassisted for some time, I got up and looked around."

"It was well for the professor that I did so."

"Warren Warr had overpowered him, and was about to plunge a knife into his throat."

"A single bound and heavy blow saved his life, and stretched the would-be assassin senseless on the ice."

"Laurence Lovelace had succeeded in punishing Velven terribly."

"That villain was groaning in a pool of blood."

"Hurrah!" cried Laurence. "We've licked the rascals; and now what shall we do with them?"

"Leave them on the ice," cried Von Schmack.

"It would serve them right," I replied. "Richly indeed do they deserve such punishment; but our duty is plain. We must bind them securely, and take them with us."

"This suggestion was immediately carried out, and then we looked about us for some means of shelter from the snow, which was falling rapidly."

"We had ample materials for the purpose in the car, and quickly extemporized a tent large enough to hold us and our prisoners."

"A fire was next lighted, and we proceeded to

make ourselves as comfortable as possible on that memorable Christmas Eve."

"Soups and preserved meats, with biscuits, enabled us to make a capital repast, after which we wrapped ourselves in the blankets, and went to sleep."

"We took it in turns to watch."

"Early the next morning I awoke from my last sleep."

"It was still snowing heavily, and this being Christmas Day, my thoughts naturally wandered to merry England, which, ere long, would peal from end to end with the glorious tumult of her bells."

"How different would all things be there to what they were here in this dreary region of immutable icebergs and silent snow."

"Nevertheless, we had a jolly time—Von Schmack, Laurence Lovelace, and myself."

"But not so did our wretched prisoners, who were so morose, that at first it seemed as if they had resolved to starve themselves to death."

"At length, however, they yielded to the imperative demands of nature, and consented to share our repast."

"Being anxious to relieve ourselves of the responsibility of keeping them, we reluctantly abandoned our design of exploring those wonderful realms still further north, and, on the following day, the 'Swallow' once more rose to the sky."

"Quickly were the Arctic Regions left behind, and on we sailed, by day and night, until, to our joy, we saw and recognized the beautiful scenery of Kent beneath us."

"Adolph Caspar, Warren Warr, and Stephen Velven, still live—but only to wear the garb of convicts, and toil until the hour arrives when 'the ancient sleep of humankind' comes down upon them within those prison walls."

"Amine is my own darling wife."

ALICE WENLEY;

OR,

TWICE SAVED.

BY MON MYRTLE.

THE town of L—, in Central Illinois, contained the banking office of the Messrs. Melrose Brothers.

Among the employes of the above firm was a youth of about nineteen named Ned Shelburne.

The honest and manly bearing of this young man made him an especial favorite with his employers, who, admiring his noble qualities, respected him accordingly.

On the evening on which our story opens, after having concluded the duties required of him, our hero was about placing the books together with the money in the safe, having previously counted the latter.

It was six o'clock, the hour for closing, and most of the clerks—in fact all, with the exception of himself—had departed in the direction of their respective homes.

The senior proprietor, Mr. Henry Melrose, occupied his chair inside the office railings, apparently engaged in the perusal of an evening newspaper, but in reality, as Ned afterwards learned, watching his movements with suspicious glances, which, inasmuch as he was doing his duty honestly and uprightly, our hero did not take the trouble to notice.

For some days past, the summings up of the cash accounts had shown a deficiency of several hundred dollars, the absence of which neither Ned nor the clerk having charge of the deposit books could satisfactorily explain.

The latter, being a nephew of their worthy employers, was, of course, above suspicion.

Not so our hero; however, being alone in the place at the recommendation of a New York banker, with whom he had served a number of years when comparatively young, and in which city his parents, brothers and sisters resided, it was no more than could be expected that he should be looked upon with suspicion by Mr. Melrose, at

though he had endeavored to his utmost to give entire satisfaction.

Discovering nothing to confirm his suspicion, Mr. Melrose received the keys of the safe, which Ned handed him, and having turned down the gas, followed our hero to the door, which having locked and bade Ned good-evening, disappeared in the direction of his mansion.

Ned moved towards his boarding-house at a leisurely pace. About fifteen minutes elapsed when, within a square of his lodgings, he was suddenly brought to a standstill by feeling a hand laid upon his shoulder, as the familiar voice of his fellow-clerk, Harry Hartwell, the nephew of the Melrose Brothers, exclaimed, rather boisterously:

"How do, Shelburne?"

"I am well enough," replied our hero, rather coldly, wondering inwardly what had induced the clerk with whom he was associated all day, to inquire after his health, having bade him good evening less than half an hour previous. However, his object was soon made manifest.

"Can you," he began, "change for me a couple of large bills, some two hundred dollars?"

"Yes," replied Ned, always ready to oblige, producing his wallet in which he had a considerable amount of money, the savings of ten months which he had that day drawn from a savings bank with the intention of investing it in railroad shares which were said to be paying a handsome premium. The exchange was speedily effected, Ned giving him twenty ten-dollar notes in exchange for two fifties and a one hundred dollar bill.

"Good-evening," said Hartwell, as he turned to go, and Ned thought he detected a chuckle in his tone.

As he entered his room in the hotel, Ned began to think over his last transaction, and glanced keenly at the bills to assure himself that they were genuine. He was always an adept at detecting counterfeits; a glance at them, however, convinced him that they were good, and restoring them to his pocket, he descended to the dining-hall, and after having discussed a hearty meal, returned to his room and picking up a newspaper sat reading until the shadow of evening rendered objects obscure.

Being tired of reading, Ned determined to take a walk, and as the night was a beautiful moonlight one, strolled about the streets and bent his steps in the direction of the only theatre of which the town could boast. As it was yet early, he determined to witness the play, and having purchased his ticket, took a seat in the not very spacious hall.

As he glanced around, his attention was attracted by a young lady who occupied the box on the left of the stage, and as he gazed at her he thought he had never before beheld one half so lovely. To say that she was beautiful would be but a slight estimate of her angelic loveliness; her face was oval with a finely chiseled brow, Grecian nose, cherry lips, blooming cheeks, and soft hazel eyes, whose glance seemed capable of melting a heart and fanning the embers of love into a glowing flame.

Ned could no longer call his heart his own; he had given it at first glance to the fair unknown who looked so fascinating. The curtain arose, but so little attention did Ned pay to it, that when the first act was over he was not aware that it had yet commenced, so intent was he in watching his heart's ideal; and when he inquired the reason of a hearty *encore* that was being given, of a gentleman who sat next him, he stared at our hero as though regarding him as an idiot, replying that a selection by a popular opera singer was receiving the applause it well merited. Again his eyes wandered to the face of the girl, whom to see was to love. This time he perceived, with a pang of jealousy, that she was not alone, for the form of a fashionably-dressed gentleman of about his own age could be seen sitting beside, and conversing with her, quite gallantly. A glance at the youth's features convinced Ned at sight that he was none other than Harry Hartwell, the nephew of their employer. That she was the girl about whom she had heard Hartwell speak so much, Ned felt certain. "No wonder," he soliloquized, "that he thinks so much about her; she is the fairest creature that I have ever seen." That he was not her only observer Ned

was convinced for, from what he could learn from the confused murmurs of the young men around him, it appeared that she was the theme of all conversation.

Others silently gazed at her through their opera glasses without offering any comment. One or two, he heard whisper: "Hartwell is a lucky fellow!" and in this conclusion vied. All the evening he paid more attention to her features than to the play, which was really an excellent one. If he could only obtain an introduction to her, he thought, who knows but that I might succeed in eclipsing him; but this seemed impossible, as he felt certain that Hartwell was her accepted suitor; the object upon whom all her love was centered. "So," Ned murmured to himself, "that is the beautiful Alice Wenley."

The performance being over, Ned withdrew from the hall, and paused for a few moments on the sidewalk in front of the hall in hopes of meeting Hartwell and gaining an introduction to his companion.

In this, however, he failed, and started slowly toward his hotel, endeavoring to forget the sweet face of her whom he saw smiling at the theatre. Arriving at the hotel, Ned proceeded at once to his room, and in half an hour was wrapped in a dreamless slumber, from which he did not awaken until the following morning, when he arose, dressed hastily, and descended to breakfast, after which he hurried to the office. On entering Ned found that Hartwell was already there, and beside him, engaged in earnest conversation, stood Mr. Melrose, junior. The morning wore on, nothing unusual occurring to disturb the usual official duties to which each person employed was supposed to attend. About noon Mr. Henry Melrose requested Ned to go and collect a bill; the man from whom he was to receive payment resided about two miles distant in a westerly direction.

Our hero donned his hat and coat and started on his errand. The road over which he was obliged to travel was shady and secluded, lying directly through the portion of the town inhabited by the wealthy people. As Ned passed along the road whistling an opera air, his attention was attracted by a shrill scream, mingling with the trampling of horses' hoofs, apparently proceeding from around a bend in the road. Hastening forward, he suddenly beheld a sight which caused him to shudder with terror; for, advancing towards him at a furious pace, were a span of black horses covered with foam, attached to a family coach, on the seat of which crouched, her face convulsed with terror, the same young lady whom he had seen the night previous at the theatre. As soon as he recognized her, his heart beat wildly, and as a glance told him the danger she was exposed to, he determined, in an instant, to save her or perish in the attempt. Watching the advancing steeds, Ned waited until they were almost beside him, when with a spring he grasped the bridle of the nearest animal. Instantly he was lifted off his feet, but clung to the bridle with a desperate clutch, all the while endeavoring to his utmost to check the speed of the frantic animals. For a moment it seemed as though he would succeed; but for a moment only. The next, he found himself in about the greatest peril he had ever been exposed to. Hanging from the bits of the infuriated animals, he discovered that it was no easy matter to check their headlong pace; yet he clung on with the energy of despair, and soon perceived that the weight of his body dangling from the bits began to tell upon the animals, causing them to somewhat slacken their wild speed. Ned's limbs were bruised and blackened from contact with those of the horses, and his arms were terribly strained in supporting his weight.

Would nobody comes to his assistance? he thought, in an agony of despair. Nobody seemed to be on the road; our hero felt that he could not possibly maintain his position any longer. Summoning all his strength for a final effort, Ned threw one foot over the pole of the vehicle, and drew himself upon the horse's back. It was a daring movement, but he knew that if it was accomplished, he could undoubtedly bring the animal to a standstill.

Fortune favored him, and a moment later he was astride the left-hand horse and seizing the reins, tugged with all his strength, at the same time

speaking softly to the mad steeds, in hopes of thus quieting their terror, soon having the satisfaction of bringing them to an easy trot, and conquering them without further trouble. Having brought them to a halt, Ned jumped to the ground, forgetting for a moment the pain of his bruised limbs. Approaching the carriage, he lifted his hat to the fair occupant, who had nearly recovered from the effects of her fright.

"How can I ever thank you sufficiently," she gasped, extending her hand toward him.

Taking her hand in a graceful clasp, Ned replied that he was sufficiently rewarded by beholding her uninjured. At this she smiled, one of her sweet, bewitching smiles, and murmured: "Thank you."

"May I request the pleasure of driving you home?" he asked.

"I should be most happy to have you do so, Mr.—Mr."—

"Shelburne," Ned suggested.

"Mr. Shelburne? Oh! that is a pretty name!"

"Do you think so?" Ned replied, adding: "I am glad it suits you."

Stepping lightly into the richly-upholstered carriage, our hero seized the reins, and turning the carriage in an opposite direction, started the now totally subdued horses homeward. Miss Wenley was seated beside him, and they soon engaged in a pleasant conversation, which lasted until, under her directions, Ned drew up before the piazza of a handsome villa, surrounded by green lawn and fruit trees, the latter in full bloom, as it was now toward the middle of May.

Alighting from the carriage, our hero secured the horses by means of a stout halter to a post which stood on the edge of the graveled sidewalk, and having helped his fair companion to alight, and bidding her good-day, was about departing on his errand, when, gently grasping his arm, Alice begged him to wait a few moments, until she had introduced him to her father and sisters.

Ned assured her that he would be happy to tarry, but on this present occasion he was on business of importance.

"Never mind the business," she pleaded, in her soft, sweet voice. "I will not detain you long."

"Very well," the clerk replied. "Since you desire it, I will accompany you into the house."

Ascending the granite steps, our hero rang the bell.

They had not long to wait; presently a servant appeared, who ushered them into the drawing-room.

"You will please excuse me a moment, Mr. Shelburne," smiled Alice.

"Certainly," Ned replied, bowing.

She tripped lightly out of the room, soon reappearing, accompanied by her father, a stately gentleman of about two-and-forty, and two elder sisters.

As they advanced, Ned arose and was introduced by the fair Alice.

"So this is the young man who saved your life!" exclaimed Mr. Wenley.

"Yes, sir," replied Alice.

"Young man," exclaimed Mr. Wenley, shaking Ned's hand heartily, "you have rendered us a service which elicits our profound thanks."

"I did nothing more than another would have done. No man would have stood by and seen this lady killed or mangled by the frantic horses, without endeavoring to prevent it."

"But few would risk their own life in so perilous an undertaking, none but a brave man would go to her assistance."

"I am by no means a hero," Ned replied; "but I could by no means stand by and see such a lovely girl maimed before my eyes, without an effort on my part to save her."

At this the fair Alice blushed, and the two elder sisters, whose names he had learned were Maude and Eveline, exchanged glances; although both were very prepossessing in appearance, neither had as yet attracted the attention of any young man, and both envied Alice in consequence.

"How did the runaway happen?" queried Mr. Wenley, addressing Alice. "I thought that Charles was fully competent to manage the horses?"

"He was, but having left his whip in the stable he went after it, meanwhile I took my seat in the

carriage; as I did so, I noticed that the horses were unhitched and endeavored to obtain possession of the reins. In this, however, I was unsuccessful," continued Alice, "and as I again took my seat the horses suddenly started. The reins being on the ground, I had not the slightest means of checking their headlong speed, and so I began to scream; but as the road is so lonely, nobody came to my assistance, and I would have been killed, had it not been for Mr. Shelburne, who bravely sprang out in front of the horses, and after no little trouble and peril, succeeded in checking them."

"Again, young man, allow me to offer my most sincere thanks!" exclaimed Mr. Wenley, adding: "I shall discharge that coachman this very day."

"No, father, pray do not," pleaded Alice, "I'm sure it was not his fault!"

"Very well; if you wish it, I will allow him to remain, though he should receive a severe scolding for his carelessness." At this juncture, remembering his errand, Ned begged to be excused, pleading important business.

"But," suggested Mr. Wenley, "you will call again?"

"Yes, please do," pleaded Alice; "we shall be so happy to have you do so." She placed a peculiar stress upon so, and our hero noted it with throbbing heart.

"Thank you, I shall," he replied, "since you desire it."

"Who is your employer?" queried Mr. Wenley.

"The Messrs. Melrose Brothers," our hero replied.

"Oh, is that so? I know them very well, and will call in to see you occasionally."

"Do, if you please; I shall always be happy to see you."

"By the way," mused Mr. Wenley, addressing Alice, "that is the same place where Hartwell is employed, is it not?"

"Yes," answered the girl; and Ned thought he traced a tone of disgust in her voice.

"Of course you are acquainted with Mr. Hartwell?" queried Eveline.

"I am," Ned replied, adding: "I must go now."

"Well, good-day," replied all, warmly, while Alice accompanied him to the door. As he passed out, Ned asked permission to visit her often, to which she replied she would be happy to have him do so. Grasping her soft hand gently, he bade her adieu, and in a moment was hurrying down the road on his errand.

Half an hour later he halted before the mansion of the gentleman of whom he was to collect the amount represented in the bill. Having rang the bell, a servant answered the summons, and Ned was ushered into a reception room which opened off the hall. In a few moments the gentleman of whom he was in quest made his appearance. He bowed stiffly, evidently aware of our hero's business, and before the latter had an opportunity of presenting the bill, asked:

"What is the amount of my indebtedness to the Messrs Melrose Brothers?"

"Two hundred and twenty dollars," Ned replied, glancing at the bill.

"Please receipt it, young man."

Ned did so, and handing it to the gentleman, received the required amount. Bowing his acknowledgements, our hero was conducted by a servant, and having bade the gentlemanly debtor adieu, was soon on his way back to the office.

Several weeks passed, during which time he had made several visits to the home of the lovely Alice, she occasionally taking walks with him during the balmy evenings, much to the annoyance of Hartwell, who had lately found it difficult to induce her to receive his visits at all. One pleasant morning, shortly after entering the office, Ned was accosted by the senior member of the firm, as follows:

"So the books are wrong again?"

"As usual," replied Ned.

"The cash is short, is it not?"

"It is."

"Very good; now will you be kind enough to hand over the money you have been stealing from us, before it becomes necessary to have you arrested."

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed our hero,

hotly; "do you mean to accuse me of being a thief?"

"Hartwell, step this way," cried Mr. Melrose.

"Well, sir," replied Hartwell, stepping up to his uncle.

"You saw Shelburne take that money, did you not?" demanded Mr. Melrose.

"Yes, sir; I did—I swear I did."

This audacious lie set Ned's blood boiling with indignation, and before he could control himself, he exclaimed:

"You lie, you perjured villain, you know you lie!"

"Dare you call me a liar?" Hartwell almost screamed.

"You are a liar, and a consummate scoundrel!" Ned replied.

"By thunder!" he hissed, "I won't stand that from any man!" As he spoke he aimed a blow at Ned's face, which, had it taken effect, would have spoiled our hero's looks for many a day. Dodging aside, the blow intended for our hero caught Mr. Melrose on the chin, causing his teeth to rattle. Quickly clenching his right hand, Ned struck out with all his strength at Hartwell, who reeled back against the office railings, the blood flowing from a gash in his forehead.

At the sound of the scuffle, the other clerks instantly abandoned their various occupations, and clustered round the combatants, eager to learn the cause of the disturbance. Hartwell quickly regained his feet, and with a growl of savage fury, rushed upon Ned, endeavoring to clutch his throat and annihilate him.

In this he was partly successful, and a moment later both were rolling on the floor. Ned hated to strike him while he was down, but he clutched his throat so desperately that our hero was obliged to administer a few sharp blows to compel him to relax his grip, which was so tight as to cause Ned's eyes to start from their sockets. At this juncture the clerks interfered, dragging the combatants apart by main force. Mr. Melrose stepped up to his worthy nephew to inquire if he was much hurt, at the same time dispatching a boy to the druggist for some court-plaster to cover the gash in Hartwell's forehead.

"No; I am not much hurt," returned Hartwell, trembling as he spoke, adding: "Send that dog about his business right away, or I leave you forever."

"But it would not be just, you struck the first blow," remonstrated Mr. Melrose.

"Did I not have sufficient cause for so doing?" demanded Hartwell.

"No doubt."

"Will you discharge him or not?"

"I will not."

"Then you prefer to have a thief in your employ rather than your own nephew?"

"Take that back!" interrupted Ned, stepping forward.

"Take what back?"

"That cowardly epithet you applied to me."

"Hold," interrupted Mr. Melrose, stepping between the two exasperated youths. "Perhaps he was hasty in his accusation. Mr. Shelburne are you willing to be searched?"

"I am not," Ned replied, with emphasis. "Is not my word sufficient to place me above suspicion as to my degrading myself in committing so cowardly an act?"

"Under ordinary circumstances it is; but in this case you will oblige me by a compliance with my request."

"Very well, sir; to avoid further trouble I will do as you desire."

As our hero spoke, he turned all his pockets inside out, handing Mr. Melrose his pocket-book and the key of his room, informing him that he was at liberty to search his apartments. Mr. Melrose opened the wallet, and took therefrom the bills Ned had received from Hartwell in exchange for smaller ones, two weeks previous, and which, with the exception of one, he had not as yet had occasion to use. Holding them near a gas light, a glance seemed to convince him, as he replied:

"These are the very bills that were stolen!"

A triumphant smile overspread Hartwell's features, as he sneered: "Now are you not a thief?"

Ned certainly was in a bewildering predicament. The question now arose, how was he to prove that

Hartwell had presented these very bills to him to exchange? At a glance he saw the deep plot into whose meshes he had been drawn by the crafty villain.

"Are you perfectly certain that these are the same bills?" asked Ned, addressing Mr. Melrose.

"I am as certain that they are ours, as that Hartwell is my own nephew, for we mark all our large bills with invisible ink, and register their numbers before again circulating them. How came these in your possession?"

"Hartwell gave them to me to change one day last week."

"'Tis false!" shouted Hartwell, paling a little.

"Nevertheless it is the truth," exclaimed Ned, although I have no witnesses to bear testimony to the fact."

"Yes, you have," interrupted a voice, and as Ned turned to see who had spoken, he recognized in the speaker one of the clerks, named Reynolds. As he spoke, the young man stepped up before Mr. Melrose and said:

"Not only did I see Hartwell give the same bills in exchange for those of Shelburne's; but I saw him abstract them from the pile that same morning."

"You lie," hissed Hartwell, springing forward.

"Not so fast," our hero exclaimed, placing a hand upon his shoulder. Mr. Melrose also laid a hand upon his shoulder, commanding him to keep quiet.

"Now, Reynolds," he said, "I will ask you a few questions:

"Are you prepared to swear that the statement you have just made is true?"

"I am, sir," was the quiet reply.

Turning to Hartwell, who was growing ashy pale, Mr. Melrose asked:

"What have you to say to these charges?"

"Only that they are infamously false."

"Well, the only way that I can settle this, is to have you both arrested, and tried before a judge and jury."

At this announcement Hartwell turned a shade paler, if possible, and stood trembling with fear.

"Are you both ready to go?" asked Mr. Melrose.

"I am," replied Ned, coolly.

Hartwell made no reply, but gasped convulsively for breath. Motioning to a clerk, Mr. Melrose bade him summon an officer.

"Wait one moment," gasped Hartwell.

"Well, what is it?"

"I confess that I did take the money myself, Oh, spare me!" implored the wretched young man, in piteous accents.

It was now our hero's turn to smile triumphantly.

"I will not spare you. No! not if you were my own son. Call the policeman!" thundered Mr. Melrose.

Suddenly Hartwell uttered a deep sigh, and fell in a fit.

"Run for a doctor, never mind the policeman!" exclaimed Mr. Melrose, excitedly.

A physician soon arrived, who ordered the immediate conveyance of Hartwell to his room, a block distant, where he received the necessary medical assistance.

Mr. Melrose called Ned into his private office, where he apologized handsomely for ever having suspected our hero of so cowardly a crime.

Soon after the office was closed for the night, and Ned spent the evening in his room, silently congratulating himself on his fortunate escape from arrest. Next morning he was in the office at the usual time. Hartwell had not yet made his appearance. As Mr. Melrose passed our hero's desk, the latter ventured to ask:

"How is your nephew this morning, sir?"

"Has he not arrived yet?"

"No," replied Ned.

"Probably the misguided fellow is afraid to come in this morning, no doubt thinking I mean to have him arrested. Here, Reynolds!"

"Yes, sir."

The young man who had come so opportunely to Ned's rescue in the late difficulty approached their employer, awaiting his orders.

"Go immediately to the 'Washington House,' and see how my nephew is this morning."

"Yes, sir," said Reynolds, though Ned could

see by the wry face he made, that he did not appreciate the errand.

Ten minutes elapsed, when he at length returned.

"Hartwell is not there, sir. Took the train for St. Louis early this morning."

"The best thing he could have done under the circumstances. But, hello! Shelbourne, what is the matter with that safe?"

Ned glanced in the direction indicated, and saw that the door had been forced open, and afterwards closed. Hastily approaching it he opened the door, which he was surprised to learn hung by a single hinge, and on searching further was amazed as well as Mr. Melrose, to find it emptied of its valuable contents.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Melrose. "Who has done this?"

"Who but Hartwell?" suggested Reynolds.

"But he must have had help," Ned observed. "He could hardly have accomplished the task alone and unaided."

"Any of the boys with whom he associated would have been glad to have the chance to assist him," returned Reynolds.

As soon as Mr. Melrose discovered that the office had been robbed, he hastened immediately to the telegraph office—first, however, calling upon the chief of police, who assisted him to his utmost. It was found that several rough characters had suddenly left town. These were supposed to be Hartwell's confederates.

A week passed, and no tidings of the robbers, whom all attempts to capture had proved fruitless.

During this interval, our hero had twice called on the young lady he had so opportunely rescued from her peril. One evening, as he was walking on the moonlit road beside her, he thought he heard footsteps behind them. For some time he did not notice this, as it was nothing unusual for people to be taking a stroll in the same direction as themselves of a pleasant evening. But at length, as it seemed that the person did not draw nearer, but seemed to hang back, Ned's suspicions were aroused, as he conjectured that whoever it was had a motive in thus avoiding nearer approach, and he turned suddenly in hopes of learning by whom they were followed, and for what purpose.

Suddenly a bright flash, followed by a sharp report rent the air, and Shelbourne reeled backward as a bullet grazed his head; again the sharp report of a pistol echoed on the still, night air; this time the ball passed through Ned's right arm, which fell useless at his side. Alice uttered a scream of terror and would have fallen, had not our hero held her tightly across his left arm.

"Who are you, you cowardly villain? Speak!" he cried.

"Ho, ho! my boy, do you not recognize me?"

The voice seemed familiar, and as Ned strained his eyes through the pale moonlight he recognized Hartwell.

"I do recognize you now; you are Hartwell, a vile liar, thief, and assassin!"

"Oh! am I?" he asked, biting his lips with rage.

"What was your object in thus following and assaulting me? Do you not know that the police are in search of you?"

"Perhaps I do, and as to my design of following and shooting at you, I mean to kill you and carry off the girl."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Harry," pleaded Alice; "spare this young man's life! I am sure he never harmed you intentionally."

"Spare him? not I," returned Hartwell; "so prepare, young man, in five minutes' time you will meet your God."

"Oh, Harry!" pleaded Alice.

"Shut up, or I'll kill you, too," was the brutal interruption.

Ned had never carried a weapon of any kind, and was thus taken at disadvantage; however, he determined not to ask for mercy, which he knew would be refused him. Hartwell raised the cocked revolver, and advanced a few paces, exclaiming: "Time is up; die!"

Our hero closed his eyes; while Alice fell back, fainting with terror. Hartwell, still unrelenting, deliberately pulled the trigger. Then came a sharp report, and a bullet whistled by Ned's ear. Hartwell had missed.

"Curse it!" he exclaimed, again cocking the revolver, "that was the worst shot I ever fired." Ned was about to spring forward, disabled as he was, and attempt to wrest the weapon from his grasp, when suddenly a report not louder than the explosion of a percussion cap was heard. With an oath, Hartwell dropped his pistol, staggered,

and fell in a convulsed heap on the road, the blood trickling in a sickly stream from his breast; at the same instant a dark form arose from the bushes, smoking pistol in hand. In this form our hero recognized his friend Reynolds, and advanced to meet him.

"Are you hurt, Shelbourne?" he asked.

"A little," replied Ned, glancing at his wounded arm.

"That's bad; both of you need a doctor; I will go for one."

As he departed on his errand, our hero raised the fainting girl, and resting her head upon his knees, endeavored to bring her to, by fanning her with his straw hat.

In this he was successful, and by the time Reynolds arrived with the doctor, and a squad of police, she was sufficiently recovered to be able to stand.

The surgeon, who was a skillful one, quickly reduced the fractured limb of our hero, after which he attended to Hartwell. He extracted the ball with very little difficulty, but, in reply to Ned's inquiry as to the nature and probable result of the wound, said:

"He cannot possibly recover, and will be dead before to-morrow morning."

Poor, misguided fellow. In his heart Ned forgave him all the injury he had ever inflicted upon him.

Shelbourne's arm was placed in a sling, and having seen Alice home, he returned to his room.

That night, Hartwell recovered consciousness before his death, and asked to see his uncle. Mr. Melrose, at his request, visited the hospital, where the unfortunate man made a confession implicating several young men in the crime of robbery. These were subsequently arrested and served long terms in the state prison.

* * * * *

Hartwell died at sunrise the following morning, and his body was privately interred in the village cemetery. Alice is now Mrs. Shelbourne. Our hero, accompanied by his lovely wife, removed to an eastern city, where he took Reynolds—who had married Maude, Alice's oldest sister—into partnership with him; fortune favored them, and after a few years of industrious labor, they amassed a fortune sufficiently large to live upon, and then disposed of their business.

[THE END.]

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